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ABSTRACT

This report traces the history of the fatherhood field, reviews its accomplishments to date, and identifies areas in need of further work. It is intended for researchers, advocates, practitioners, and funders within the fatherhood field as well as leaders of social services organizations and public agencies that work with women and children but have not historically focused on fathers. It explains that the presence of fathers in children's lives produces a profound and positive impact on the wellbeing of the children. The first section of the report introduces the issue. The second section discusses the history of the fatherhood field (e.g., the fatherhood issue emerges, 1968-87, fatherhood debuts on the federal policy agenda, 1988-93, and federal involvement increases 1994-95). The third section discusses research, focusing on seven core findings about fathers. The fourth section discusses policy (child support and beyond). The fifth section looks at the future of the field (accomplishments, challenges, and the future). The sixth section presents a chronology of the fatherhood field. An appendix offers a listing of national fatherhood organizations. (SM)



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# MAKING FATHERS COUNT

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## Assessing the Progress of Responsible Fatherhood Efforts

*Social Policy Action Network*
*Kathleen Sylvester and*
*Kathleen Reich for the*
*Annie E. Casey Foundation*

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# Introduction

For far too long, fathers have been the missing piece in the family policy agenda. No longer. During the past quarter century, changes in demographics and gender roles, intensive research, major shifts in public policy, and practical experience have converged to create new public awareness of two fundamental truths.

The first is that father absence matters. When children grow up without caring and committed fathers in their lives, they are more likely to grow up in poverty. While the poverty rate for children in two-parent families is 8.4 percent, the rate for children in divorced families is 31.3 percent. For children whose parents never married, the poverty rate is 64.1 percent.[1]

The non-economic costs of father absence may be even more serious. Children raised without fathers at home are more likely to perform poorly in school;[2] develop emotional problems; engage in risky behaviors such as early sexual activity and drug and alcohol abuse;[3] and experience violence as children.[4] In addition, fatherless boys are more likely to become violent men than are boys raised with fathers.[5]

The second fundamental truth is that father presence matters. The presence of a caring adult male in the life of child does not simply reduce the negative consequences of fatherlessness. Father presence produces a profound and positive impact on the life of that child. Father-child interactions promote children's well-being, perceptual abilities, and ability to form relationships.[6]

Children with fathers or close relationships with adult males have higher self-esteem, are better learners, and are less likely to be depressed.[7] Children whose fathers share meals, spend leisure time with them, or help them with homework do significantly better in school than those children whose fathers do not.[8] And men whose fathers cared and sacrificed for them are more likely to become responsible fathers themselves.[9]

In a nation where 23 million children live in homes without their biological fathers, and 20 million live in single-parent homes[10]— most of them lacking fathers, recognizing these truths has the potential to change the lives of many children for the better.

Over the past quarter century, the nation and its communities have made substantial progress toward recognizing these truths. A relatively small number of men and women have devoted their professional lives to proving that fathers are important to children—and finding ways to help fathers stay connected to their families and communities. Over the past decade, those efforts have found new support and increased visibility.

These leaders, who are based in federal agencies, foundations, national non-profits, universities, and community-based organizations, have worked individually and together to promote father involvement in the lives of children and families. They have raised public awareness about fathers, sponsored and conducted research about family dynamics and father involvement, and lobbied for new government investments to support the role of fathers in families — particularly in low-income, "fragile" families.

And over the past six years in particular, their successes have been impressive. The profile of fatherhood has been brought to the public's attention through significant media coverage, congressional activity, and attention from two presidential administrations. Thousands of community-based organizations have been formed to help fathers become and stay more involved with their children. And thanks to considerable philanthropic support, there is now a national infrastructure to connect practitioners with researchers and advocates in the field. The phrase "responsible fatherhood" now effectively communicates a basic idea that most Americans recognize and support: Fathers Matter.

Yet no one working in the field would deny that today, fatherhood efforts are at a crossroads. There are ongoing ideological debates about whether responsible fatherhood advocates should adapt to cultural shifts such as changes in marriage patterns, or try to reverse them. The field faces serious and unresolved questions about how to deal with such basic issues as domestic violence and gender equity. And on a fundamental level, proposed government support for fatherhood activities raises core questions about whether—and how—government should become involved in the lives of families.

In addition to ideological conflicts, the field faces political uncertainties because of the public's resistance to helping "undeserving" fathers. As the U.S. Congress revisits welfare reform in 2002, child support reforms will certainly be addressed. But it is unclear how much emphasis federal policymakers will place on helping fathers find jobs to enable them to pay child support. While many states have embraced the issue by launching new responsible fatherhood initiatives, public spending on these efforts remains relatively small. And at the local level, social service organizations working with families continue to focus their most significant efforts on mothers and children.

In an era of increasing public demand for measurable outcomes, no large-scale responsible fatherhood demonstration has shown conclusive evidence that it improves the lives of children whose fathers have participated. In addition, the fatherhood field—if it can yet be called a field—still lacks professional standards of practice.

And while the different views and strategies of the fatherhood groups offer a rich array of complementary efforts in support of their common purpose, the leaders of the fatherhood groups often present their ideas as competing rather than complementary. Such seeming conflict could fail to leverage needed changes in public policy.

Thus it remains unclear whether efforts to integrate fathers fully into the social and economic lives of families will become a true social movement or whether the responsible fatherhood movement will gradually lose momentum and fade from the public's social agenda.

So the time has come to assess what the emerging fatherhood field has accomplished to date and to identify the challenges that remain. This paper traces the history of the fatherhood field, reviews its accomplishments thus far, and identifies areas in need of further efforts.

The paper is intended primarily for two audiences. First, it is intended for researchers, advocates, practitioners, and funders within the fatherhood field. We hope this paper will contribute to the further development of the field by engaging the fatherhood community in a debate about next steps and that its leaders will use this paper to help evaluate their own efforts and design future work to address the challenges we describe.

The paper is also intended for leaders of social services organizations and public agencies that work with women and children—but have not historically focused on fathers. We hope that leaders in these efforts will read the paper to learn why fathers are critical to the success of their efforts and how they can integrate this population more fully into their work.

*Father-child interactions promote children's well-being, perceptual abilities, and ability to form relationships.*

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# The Fatherhood 'Field' Takes Shape: A BRIEF HISTORY

## THE FATHERHOOD ISSUE EMERGES 1968-1987

During the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the drive for gender equality changed the roles the women and men—in the larger society as well as in the family—profoundly. With increases in divorce and single parenthood, fathers were no longer narrowly defined as breadwinners for their families.

In 1975, in reviewing the literature about fathers and children, psychologist Michael Lamb argued that the father-child relationship deserved more attention than it received in research. In *Fathers: Forgotten Contributors to Child Development,*[1] Lamb suggested that future research about the father's role could be organized around the hypothesis that in contrast to the mother's caretaker role, the father's main socializing role is introducing his child to the world and reality beyond the home. It was a challenge that many researchers would accept, resulting in important work that redefined the role of fathers and deepened understanding of fathers' effects on the lives of their children.

The year 1975 also saw the publication of *Who Will Raise the Children? New Options for Fathers (and Mothers)* by Dr. James A. Levine, based on research that he began in 1973 with support from the Ford Foundation. Levine's work echoed Lamb's message about the importance of the father's role, but issued a different challenge. Levine suggested that the long-term goal of equal opportunity for women in American society would never be achieved without serious and meaningful recognition of the significance, interest, and responsibility of fathers in children's lives. Levine called for changes in major social institutions, changes in how families raise boys and girls, and changes in the mutual expectations of men and women as they form families.

As the 1980s progressed, concern about father absence emerged as an issue of broad national concern. A number of social factors contributed to this trend. First, as more mothers entered the workforce, the traditional division of labor within American families—father as breadwinner, mother as caretaker—no longer applied. The rise of these two-worker families intensified public concern about children growing up without enough attention from their parents—and without suitable role models. The

dramatic increase in divorce rates separated even more children from fathers and gave rise to a "fathers' rights" movement formed by men alleging unfair treatment by courts in child custody and divorce agreements. Finally, the increase in births to never-married couples often separated fathers from their children from birth.

During the 1970s and 1980s, a handful of local programs—often begun by fathers reaching out to other fathers—emerged at the grassroots level. These programs struggled to emphasize the importance of fathers as nurturers, teachers, disciplinarians, and role models. Some programs were aimed at middle-class fathers facing pressure from mothers to assume more responsibilities at home or those who had lost contact with their children after divorce or the breakup of relationships. Others were aimed at low-income, often never-married men, who had drifted away from their former partners and their children as well.

Tom Henry began working with low-income fathers at a community center in West Philadelphia in 1968. Charles Ballard generated the idea for what would become the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization when he began reaching out to unmarried fathers at a Cleveland hospital in 1976. And with the goal of starting a national fatherhood resource center for family-serving organizations, James Levine founded The Fatherhood Project® in 1981, initially at the Bank Street College of Education in New York. In 1984 The Fatherhood Project® hosted a major conference on fatherhood and released *Fatherhood USA: The First National Guide to Programs, Services, and Resources for and about Fathers.*

At the same time, the issue of family breakdown was becoming a topic of national conversation. The emergence of the Christian right—with its emphasis on traditional families, moral values, and committed parenting—was a clear reaction against what many people saw as the crisis of the American family. Indeed, among the first to speak out about this issue were conservatives. In 1984 Gary Bauer, a member of President Reagan's staff, hosted a White House meeting on fatherhood. Social conservatives

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encouraged fathers not only to become engaged with their children but also to recommit to their spouses, religious beliefs, and communities.

Social conservatives were not the only group focused on the implications of family breakdown. In 1985, the National Urban League, recognizing that the problem of father absence was acute in African-American inner-city communities, launched its Male Responsibility Project. The effort, led by Edward W. Pitt, was one of the first initiatives to focus on the male role in teen pregnancy. The Male Responsibility Project held national conferences in 1988 and 1989; it also spawned 60 local programs at Urban League affiliates. Also in 1985, The Fatherhood Project® launched the Teen Father Collaboration, a research and demonstration project designed to help agencies serving teen mothers include young fathers.

Discussing the role that fatherlessness played in the deterioration of inner-city communities inevitably led researchers to examine the importance of fathers as workers and economic providers. In 1987 William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* focused public attention on the link between unemployment and family breakdown. Wilson's thesis: The lack of employment opportunities for African-Americans in the inner city was essentially making low-income men "unmarriageable."

Scholarship was not confined to economic factors, however. Indeed, a new field of academic inquiry, known as "family development" or "family processes," focused on the socializing and nurturing role of fathers. By the end of the 1980s, research had begun to confirm what the public and some policymakers had long understood—that for children and families, the costs of father absence are high.

The work of Dr. Sara McLanahan of Princeton University and Dr. Irwin Garfinkel of Columbia University, for example, demonstrated that divorce often leads to a decline in living standards for women and children and that the children of never-married mothers fare even worse.[12] Dr. Judith Wallerstein's studies of children of divorce documented children's intense feelings of sadness at the perceived "loss" of their fathers—whether or not the children had good relationships and contact with their fathers after divorce.[13]

## FATHERHOOD DEBUTS ON THE FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA
## 1988-1993

In 1987 the federal government convened the 36-member National Commission on Children. The commission's final report, *Beyond Rhetoric,* asserted the importance of fatherhood and recommended

changes in policies that undermined fathers' responsibilities for their children. The first area targeted? Child support.

The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement had been established in 1975 to help families collect child support and thus reduce government spending on supports for dependent families. When Congress passed the Family Support Act in 1988, the federal government expanded its role in child support by permitting states—for the first time—to offer employment and training services to unemployed noncustodial parents unable to meet their child support obligations.

Two multicity pilot projects resulted—Parents' Fair Share and the Young Unwed Fathers Project. The projects were ambitious; they sought to discover the barriers that prevented family formation and job participation among men in low-income communities and to try to address those barriers. The Philadelphia-based Public/Private Ventures ran the Young Unwed Fathers Project, supported by government and foundation dollars. The Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation, based in New York City, ran Parents' Fair Share with similar funding sources. Each program focused on improving fathers' parenting and relationship skills as well as their job skills.

But it took a television comedy and a presidential race to move fatherhood to the top of the national political agenda. In 1992 Vice President Dan Quayle criticized the television program *Murphy Brown* for portraying the lead character as a willing single mother who was simply making a lifestyle choice. Critics derided Quayle for attacking a fictional character and for arguing that a wealthy single woman should not raise a child on her own.

Yet Quayle's criticism resonated with many, and researcher Barbara Dafoe Whitehead documented the credibility to his complaint when *Atlantic Monthly* published her article, "Dan Quayle Was Right." The article summarized research on the increased chances for negative outcomes when fathers are not involved in raising their children and attracted renewed attention to the problem of fatherlessness.

The issue of responsible fatherhood also became a theme during the 1992 presidential campaign, when Democratic candidate Bill Clinton promised to "end welfare as we know it." With that message, Clinton tapped into broadly held public sentiment that the welfare system not only fostered dependency, but also unfairly allowed large numbers of men to avoid taking responsibility for their children.

As the national welfare debate progressed in the 1990s, another troubling aspect of the male responsibility issue emerged. Advocates for teen mothers highlighted studies and reports that described how large numbers of young teen girls were impregnated by older men—under circumstances that met the legal definition of statutory rape. Responding to these reports, Congress in 1996 required states to

address statutory rape as a part of their welfare reform efforts. While the issue garnered public attention only briefly, it nevertheless contributed to the growing concern about the lack of male responsibility for families who would be supported by public dollars.

Ultimately, the child support issue became the focus of many welfare reformers who insisted that aggressive child support enforcement should be a critical component of federal legislation. Discussions of child support led back to the question of joblessness, especially among African-American men. As William Julius Wilson had noted years before, inner-city black men who could not find work were unlikely to support their families or to marry.

Resonating with Wilson's sentiments, Ralph Smith of the Philadelphia Children's Network and Tom Joe of the Center for the Study of Social Policy wrote: "The people of this nation must recognize how fundamental the dislocation of black males from mainstream American economic life has become." In their book *World Without Work: The Causes and Consequences of Black Male Joblessness,* published in 1993, Smith and Joe warned that if the nation failed to heed this problem, "We are losing not just one generation of black men, but many generations to come."[14]

Two years later, a book with a bold title, *Fatherless America,* drew major media attention and played a significant role in keeping the fatherhood issue in the public's consciousness. Author David Blankenhorn's message held social scientists, the media, and permissive attitudes about sex and gender accountable for a culture where "fatherlessness is viewed as normal—regrettable perhaps, but acceptable."[15]

## THE FIELD TAKES SHAPE
## 1994-1995

*The 1994 Nashville meeting became the first national gathering of fatherhood practitioners.*

Over the next few years, fatherhood would be embraced by a variety of groups. In August 1993, a group of prominent thinkers with Republican connections, including Don Eberly, Dr. Wade F. Horn, Karl Zinsmeister, and Dr. William Bennett, gathered to discuss family breakdown. "We realized," Horn says, "that the growing absence of fathers was the most consequential trend in the culture—for families and for civil society. But public policy is a weak instrument for reversing the trend; the answer is in the broader culture."[16] To help reverse the trend, Eberly and Horn founded the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), an organization whose goal would be stimulating a broad-based movement to restore fatherhood as a national priority.

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Prominent Democrats shared this view. In 1992 Vice President and Mrs. Gore had begun a tradition of holding a conference on families, which they called the Family Re-Union. At the 1993 conference focused on family policy, Gore's interest was piqued by the remarks of speakers—especially *Fatherlove* author Richard Louv—who addressed the importance of fathers. The Vice President later summoned fatherhood leaders—including Ralph Smith, Ronald Mincy, and James Levine—and decided to focus the 1994 Family Re-Union in Nashville on "The Role of Men in Children's Lives."

The 1994 Nashville meeting became the first national gathering of fatherhood practitioners. They met, shared stories, and recognized the common themes and obstacles in their work. The fact that the Vice President of the United States had summoned them went a long way toward helping them to believe in the importance of their efforts. After the meeting, the practitioners formed a loosely affiliated network, which subsequently became the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF).

In October 1994, NFI held the first National Summit on Fatherhood in Dallas. Attended by civic, business, and philanthropic leaders, the summit attracted considerable media attention, including a *U.S. News and World Report* cover story. NFI's Wade Horn, who would become an Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2001, describes the meeting as the galvanizing event "that really launched the [fatherhood] movement."[17]

But the leaders of the nascent fatherhood field were by no means in agreement about which themes to emphasize as their work progressed. While there was general consensus about the value of fathers as parents beyond the narrow definition of fathers as breadwinners, a clear division of opinion emerged about the best way to ensure that fathers fully engaged with their children.

Some of its leaders argued that encouraging married two-parent families is the surest way to ensure that fathers are engaged in raising children; others preferred to focus on creating economic opportunities for low-income, unwed fathers as a strategy for linking fathers to their families. While these goals have never been mutually exclusive, policymakers have often felt pressured to choose between them when deciding how to spend limited resources.

## FOUNDATIONS TAKE THE LEAD
## 1994-1995

At the national level, the philanthropic community began to focus on fatherhood in earnest in 1994, the year that Dr. Ronald B. Mincy joined the Ford Foundation and Ralph Smith joined the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Without foundation support, few of the fledgling national fatherhood organizations would

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exist. Several major funders, chiefly the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Danforth Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, began pursuing a set of complementary objectives that would broaden the research base and create an infrastructure to support the burgeoning field.

Mincy, whose previous research at the Urban Institute highlighted the effects of deteriorating labor markets on prospects for low-skilled men, moved to the Ford Foundation after working briefly at HHS on the agency's welfare reform task force. Thus, he understood better than most politicians the likely impact of welfare reform on fathers. "The 1996 legislation," Mincy says, "was about a lot more than welfare reform; it was universal paternity establishment with child support enforcement. The goal of the legislation was to ensure that three things would now be certain in life: death, taxes, and child support."[18] Mincy joined the Ford Foundation dedicated to changing the child support system.

With the support of Ford's Robert Curvin, Mincy began with a campaign based upon research he had conducted with his former Urban Institute colleague, Dr. Elaine Sorenson. Their research found that fathers of children on welfare did not fit the profile of the "deadbeat dads" who left home after a divorce or separation and *created* poverty for mothers and children. These new fathers and their families had been poor before their children were born.

Moreover, unlike divorcing couples, whose families were dissolving, many of these fathers and their fragile families were beginning a process of family formation—albeit one that did not begin with marriage. Mincy argued that taking a get-tough approach on fathers would not necessarily alleviate poverty for their children, but might add stress to the already fragile relationship between the parents and drive fathers away. "If the end goal of child support was ensuring support for low-income moms and their children, simply going after non-paying fathers would not produce that result," says Mincy.[19]

To test the validity of these ideas, Mincy focused heavily on new research. Beginning in 1994, the Ford Foundation supported the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing





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Study, which surveys primarily lower-income, unwed parents and their children. Ford also supported the Urban Institute's efforts to include father and child support-related data in the National Survey of America's Families.

The Ford Foundation also launched the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative—a coordinated effort to promote research, policy development, and practice—aimed at helping low-income, unwed parents to effectively parent their children in ten sites nationwide. To support these sites, Ford created the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL), now one of the largest national fatherhood organizations.

Also in 1994, Ralph Smith, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania law school and founder of the Philadelphia Children's Network, joined the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Before Smith's arrival, the foundation had been interested in fatherhood mainly as the issue pertained to investments in child support and income security programs.

Working with Casey Foundation President Douglas W. Nelson, Smith formulated two immediate goals. The foundation would seek to build positive public awareness about father involvement through research and education, and it would work to strengthen the fatherhood field by helping build institutions to support the field. The first projects after Smith's arrival reflected these goals. They were the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF), which would become the anchor institution for research and dissemination on fatherhood practice, and the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF), a national membership organization for practitioners.

A guiding principle of the foundation's grantmaking is to support groups with a broad array of interests and agendas. Since 1995, the foundation has supported groups with diverse political and strategic views on fatherhood. More importantly, the foundation has routinely brought these grantees together.

As Kirk Harris of Family Support America describes it, "Casey seeks to bring voices together and figure out where the voices of harmony might be."[20] Harris, vice president and general counsel of FSA, believes that the Casey Foundation's approach has the potential to build a strong and diverse fatherhood field that can incorporate men into fundamental thinking about social welfare policy.

Two other prominent national foundations joined the effort to promote the fatherhood agenda. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Danforth Foundation worked together with the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to form a funders' collaborative for fathers and families.

This informal alliance would work over the next several years to invest millions of dollars in public awareness, policy research, program demonstration, and technical assistance.

The Danforth Foundation, for example, supported James Levine and Edward W. Pitt of the Families and Work Institute in producing the influential *New Expectations: Community Strategies for Responsible Fatherhood*, in 1995. This publication provided an extensive list of options for communities and community-based organizations. Before shifting its mission to support local initiatives in 1997, Danforth provided core support for the incubation of NPNFF under the auspices of The Fatherhood Project® at the Families and Work Institute.

The Mott Foundation, which was one of the leading philanthropic funders of both the Young Unwed Fathers Project and Parents' Fair Share demonstrations, continues to support fatherhood efforts. In addition to supporting the Partners for Fragile Families initiative, Mott launched its $10.2-million Fathers at Work Initiative (FWI) in 2001.

FWI's goal is building the labor market participation and earnings of low-income, noncustodial fathers through skills training; career development; job search and placement services; on-the-job instruction; and paid internships. The three-year initiative was slated to operate in Richmond, California; Roanoke, Virginia; Chicago, Philadelphia, and two sites in New York City. Says Mott's Lorin Harris, "We're looking at two key questions that remain unanswered: How can fathers get jobs? And how can they earn more?"[21] The Mott initiative also is the first of the national demonstrations to include in its focus fathers involved in the criminal justice system.

In addition, the California-based Hewlett Foundation's support for fatherhood work began in earnest in the mid-1990s as an outgrowth of its work in family and community development. Hewlett's Alvertha Bratton Penny says the foundation quickly recognized that poor outcomes for children resulted when fathers were not engaged.

Hewlett's fatherhood grantees represent a mix of national and local projects, including grants to direct services organizations in the San Francisco Bay area, grants to Bay Area community foundations, and grants to national organizations for research and technical assistance. Penny says the overarching goal of these efforts is connecting the findings of these experiments with larger policy issues, such as welfare reform and workforce development.

## FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT INCREASES
# 1994-1995

With the influx of philanthropic funding, groups such as NFI and NPCL were able to continue educating policymakers about fatherhood issues. Beginning in 1994, the federal government began to pay increasing attention to fathers. In particular, the government focused on low-income fathers whose children ended up on social services caseloads.

Federal interest in fathers had been germinating for a decade. While the White House sponsored at least one fatherhood meeting during the Reagan Administration, federal interest in low-income fathers really emerged under President George H.W. Bush, when Dr. Louis Sullivan, secretary of Health and Human Services, created the Minority Male Initiative. The initiative's initial focus was not fatherhood; the project focused on many factors —sociological, emotional, and physical—that affected the health and well-being of minority men. Its goal was improving services to those men through a more comprehensive approach.

*Beginning in 1994, the federal government began to pay increasing attention to fathers.*

One of the initiative's indirect results was an increased understanding, across a spectrum of HHS agencies, about the personal barriers minority men face in their struggles to parent their children. The notion of the "missing man," recalls Linda Mellgren the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, emerged as a powerful theme in the initiative.[22]

After Vice President Gore's Family Re-Union in 1994, the lessons of the Minority Male Initiative began finding their way into practice. Indeed, the initiative set the stage—at least in part—for HHS' response to President Clinton's 1995 Executive Memorandum on fatherhood. Clinton directed all federal agencies to "engage and meaningfully include fathers," to modify programs designed to serve mothers and children to actively serve fathers as well, and to incorporate fathers into government research and evaluation efforts.[23]

The President's Executive Memorandum led to the creation of the HHS Fatherhood Initiative. The initiative includes efforts to support research about fathering and father absence, to enhance strong

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child support enforcement combined with employment assistance for low-income fathers, and to create partnerships with private foundations for demonstration projects serving low-income families. In June 2001 the initiative and former president of NFI Dr. Wade Horn (now HHS' assistant secretary for Children and Families) hosted the Fourth National Summit on Fatherhood, at which the President spoke to more than 600 fathers.

Two of the HHS initiative's major accomplishments have been its partnership with the Fragile Families Initiative and the designation of funds for Fatherhood Development Workshops to train public agencies on working with low-income fathers. HHS also provided information to states on using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for fathers and launched projects to promote father involvement in the Early Head Start and Head Start programs.

## FATHERHOOD IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS
# 1996-2001

The pivotal events of 1994 and 1995 set the stage for an enormous growth in research and policy initiatives to promote father involvement. New national organizations and community-based programs began to emerge across the country. While a number of dedicated individuals laid the groundwork for the field before the 1990s, its most significant accomplishments occurred in the late 1990s. Events in these recent years also have produced a clearer picture of the challenges ahead.

The remainder of this paper focuses on these accomplishments and challenges.

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# RESEARCH:

## A Solid Foundation for the Field

| ACCOMPLISHMENTS | CHALLENGES |
| --- | --- |
| Growing body of research on the seven Core Learnings developed by NCOFF | Fatherhood research is still limited; not enough information on different cultural groups and subpopulations |
| Growing body of research on the impact of father absence in children's lives | Not enough research on the benefits of father presence |
| New knowledge about the obstacles facing low-income noncustodial fathers | Few studies look at the impact of fatherhood interventions on fathers, children, and families |
| Emerging research about family dynamics within "fragile families" | Little research on "what works" in supporting fragile families, preparing men for fatherhood, and linking men to employment |

One of the fatherhood field's most significant accomplishments is its significant body of academic research about the importance of father involvement in families, the consequences of fatherlessness for children, and the barriers to effective fathering, particularly for low-income men.

Linda Mellgren of HHS—who tried unsuccessfully to convince her agency to survey noncustodial fathers in the mid-1980s—recalls that until the late 1990s, federal and private researchers rarely addressed noncustodial fathers. "Folks had moved away from trying to get fathers' points of view because of the belief that they were not reliable reporters," she says. "But men have a different perspective, and there is now a growing understanding and a commitment from the research community on the value of that perspective."[24]

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NCOFF's Director Dr. Vivian Gadsden says such research is critical because federal policy generally focuses on funding programs. "That presumes a knowledge base that people running programs know enough about fatherhood," says Gadsden. "What we've been trying to say is, we're interested in looking not just at people's participation in programs, but at what the nature of the programs is. If we have a better understanding of what constitutes a good father, or what the positive outcomes are for children based on fathers' actions, then what we find out about programs can inform us, not serve in place of knowledge. There is nothing to guide the programs."[25]

The findings from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, NCOFF's studies, and other projects are encouraging researchers to look at fatherhood as a subset of other family and child well-being issues. This research can generally be classified into three types:

- **Integrating fathers into national data sets.** Major federal research studies, such as the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), now include questions about fathers. These data sets previously focused on children and their custodial parents, leaving large gaps in researchers' knowledge about noncustodial parents and their impact on family dynamics. By including questions about fathers, NSAF is providing a fuller picture of American families and creating a richer data set that researchers nationwide can explore for the next decade.

- **Conducting large-scale research studies that focus on fathers.** A consortium of funders, including the Ford Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the federal government, are supporting the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a five-year longitudinal study of low-income fathers and families in 20 U.S. cities. The study, still in its early years, is already yielding valuable data about the extent of paternal involvement in families, how those patterns change over time, and barriers to successful fathering, particularly among single men.

- **Conducting smaller-scale and ethnographic studies** that draw a fuller picture of the role of fathers in families—with particular attention to cultural and economic differences. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has been a major supporter of this work, chiefly through its support of NCOFF.

While funding for fatherhood research lags behind that for research on custodial mothers and children, the federal government has played a key role in increasing fatherhood research. The first substantial investment came in 1992, when the government contracted the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation to pilot Parents' Fair Share, the first fully evaluated fatherhood program in the nation's history.

The 1998 report, *Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility, Family Formation, and Fatherhood,* was published by the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. This highly useful report summarized all existing research on fathers and fathering behaviors regardless

of income, ethnicity, or family status. It also identified gaps in the research and suggested new directions for researchers to pursue.

NCOFF also has been at the forefront in fostering fatherhood research through its relationships with federal research bodies such as the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and affiliation with academics at universities around the nation. NCOFF, established in 1994 at the University of Pennsylvania, began its work by surveying existing literature and working with practitioners, policymakers, and researchers to develop a set of seven hypotheses, known as the Core Learnings. NCOFF has since supported and synthesized research around these Core Learnings.

Through its research symposia, its database of more than 8,500 articles, and its sponsorship of smaller-scale studies, NCOFF's goal is building a comprehensive research base for the fatherhood field. Director Vivian Gadsden says that the goal is far from completed. Significant knowledge gaps remain, particularly in research about whether interventions—including employment programs, parenting programs, and relationship counseling—can make a difference in the lives of fathers and their children.

Dr. Aisha Ray of Chicago's Erickson Institute points out that one compelling issue has to do with changing demographics in the United States.[26] She explains that in some states, such as California, the population consists of a nonwhite majority and an increasing non-English speaking population. Yet researchers don't have a good understanding of what fathering means in communities where these demographics exist. "We're going to need to understand how communities define fathers' roles." She cites the Indian subpopulation and the growing Latino populations. "Even though Mexican- and Puerto Rican-Americans have been here for generations, we know very little about fathering in those communities." Unless these differences are understood, says Ray, "this is going to become an increasing problem."

Even in African-American families, most research is based on very poor families or adolescent parents. Says Ray, who is working with Gadsden to develop fathering indicators that really reflect differences in cultural and social class, "We don't know effects in the cases of middle-class black men or low-income white men."

The following section, which draws on NCOFF-commissioned literature reviews, describes the current state of research in the seven core learning areas.

# Seven Core Learnings
# ABOUT FATHERS

The National Center on Fathers and Families, a policy research center at the University of Philadelphia, consulted with researchers and practitioners around the nation to create a list of seven key assumptions about fathers:

1

**Fathers care, even if that caring is not shown in conventional ways.** Father caring may assume different forms—from emotional commitment to children's development to hands-on support in the home and responsibility for child care.

2

**Father presence matters—in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.**

3

**Joblessness is a major impediment to family formation and father involvement.** When the paths to work are unavailable or inaccessible, many fathers—particularly young fathers with few skills and few years of schooling—either evade the responsibility of supporting their children or turn to the underground economy to provide income.

4

**Existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment create obstacles and disincentives to father involvement.** Many young fathers, and the mothers of their children, view paternity establishment and child support enforcement activities with distrust, seeing them as punitive rather than supportive of families.

5

**A growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills to share the responsibility for parenting.** Many children are growing up in these "fragile families" and need access to two parents committed to sharing the responsibilities of child care and support.

6

**The transition from biological father to committed parent has significant developmental implications for young fathers.** For young fathers, this transition is often incomplete and problematic.

7

**Intergenerational beliefs and practices within families of origin significantly influence the behaviors of young parents.** Families wield a great deal of influence over young parents, yet many families often do not have the resources or desire to assist young men in becoming better parents.

—Adapted from *Core Learnings*, National Center on Fathers and Families, February 1, 2000. Available online: www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/core.htm

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# 1

# Fathers Care

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The body of academic research demonstrates conclusively that most fathers care about their children, even though these fathers do not demonstrate that caring in conventional ways.[27] This finding crosses all socioeconomic boundaries.

In addition, there is evidence that the way fathers care for their children differs from the way mothers care for them. For instance, fathers tend to engage in more play activities than caretaking activities. And there is a gender ideology factor that affects how fathers care because many men and women think of childrearing as "women's work."[28]

**CHALLENGES:**

As *Fathers Care* literature review authors Dr. James Earl Davis and Dr. William Eric Perkins note, men of color and unwed fathers are still missing variables in fatherhood research. "Of the more than 250 studies on father caring described in the NCOFF database, less than 20 examine the role of nonwhite fathers and few refer to unwed fathers," the review authors note. "Most of the research on fathers care of their children continues to focus on highly educated, middle-class, white, intact families. Research on fathers of color tends to focus on poor, nonresident fathers, rather than on middle-class fathers from intact families."[29]

Moreover, few studies are looking at the effects on children of recent fatherhood initiatives. "We need information on whether the efforts are working, in what ways, and for whom," says Gadsden.[30] "Despite a great deal of talk, there are relatively few studies that are actually examining the effects of the recent momentum in the field on children."

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2

# Fathers Matter

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

This research demonstrates conclusively that fathers—whether they live with their children or not—matter in the lives of their children.[31] When fathers are present, they can provide economic support for their children and assume emotional and caregiving responsibilities. When fathers are absent, their absence may negatively impact children's academic achievement, gender-specific development, general behavioral adjustment, and anger management, especially in males.

While still inadequate, a growing body of research examines the role of nonresident fathers in their children's lives. Ten years ago, there was very little data about fathers who did not live with their children, especially low-income fathers. Dr. Elaine Sorenson of the Urban Institute has estimated that about 44 percent of all nonresident fathers are missing from the National Survey of Families and Households, and about 22 percent of all nonresident fathers are missing from the Survey of Income and Program Participation.[32]

Today, such undercounts are still common, but an increase in the number of ethnographic studies of nonresident fathers, along with the findings from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, are giving researchers a fuller picture of how nonresident fathers affect the lives of their children.

**CHALLENGES:**

Despite these gains, Dr. Deborah Johnson, author of the *Father Presence Matters* literature review, notes that research still disproportionately focuses on father absence, rather than on father presence. This makes the research more negative in tone because it focuses on how father absence hurts children rather than on how father presence can benefit them.

As with the "Fathers Care" core learning, research on fathers of color is sparse and uneven. "African-American and Latino fathers are currently overrepresented in studies of father absence and underrepresented in studies of father presence and involvement," Johnson notes.[33] Current findings are often based on research that confounds race and class by comparing low-income African-American families to middle-class white families. The field also needs more research on American Indian and Asian-American fathers.

Johnson also points out that researchers need to more closely examine the effects of father absence in single-parent households, distinguishing the effects of poverty from those of family structure.[34] Dr. Ronald Mincy, now of Columbia University, agrees. He suggests that some in the fatherhood field have "carelessly interpreted" the data that shows that children are better off in two-parent homes. Mincy also suggests that not enough research has focused on the well-being of children born to unmarried couples in which fathers are intensely involved with their children. "How do those kids fare?" he asks.[35]

# 3

# Joblessness and Unemployment

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

The provider role remains a powerful concept in the eyes of fathers, the public, and policymakers. Fathers have legal and moral obligations to support their children financially. Indeed, the federal and state governments' emphasis on child support enforcement in the 1990s was largely an effort to force "deadbeat dads" who paid no child support to live up to these obligations.

But as researchers have focused their attention on fathers who do not pay child support, one fact has become increasingly clear: Some fathers do not pay because they cannot pay. One of the fatherhood field's most significant accomplishments is its success in discrediting stereotypes about low-income fathers as deadbeat dads.

Research shows that the majority of fathers who fail to meet child support obligations are uneducated, unskilled, and—perhaps most significantly—disconnected from social supports that might help them overcome these deficits.

For example, an analysis by the Urban Institute of the 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) found that nationwide, 3.4 million noncustodial fathers have incomes 200 percent below the poverty level. The Institute's analysis of data on these fathers found that, on average, they had only 11 years of education.[36] Only 10 percent of these fathers worked full time, year-round. Even more telling is the fact that the average wage for these men was only $5.40 per hour and their average annual incomes were $8,956 in 1998 dollars.[37]

In addition, many low-income fathers face legal obstacles to employment, such as criminal records and suspended driver's licenses, which make them even less attractive to employers. Three-quarters of the fathers in the SIPP sample had been arrested or were experiencing ongoing legal problems; 46 percent had been convicted of a crime.[38] Such findings paint a new and more complex picture of low-income fathers' barriers to family and community involvement.

## CHALLENGES:

More research is needed on joblessness among low-income fathers, particularly unwed fathers. "Very few studies have examined the economic status of men who father children outside of marriage, and none of those have been based on nationally representative data for this population," notes *Joblessness and Unemployment* review author Patrick Mason.[39]

The public also needs to better understand *why* fathers get derailed. Research can help advocates do a better job of explaining factors such as the hostility of governmental systems and programs to these

men, the complex extended family dynamics that affect many unmarried couples, and lack of access to work experience and job opportunities. As J. Neil Tift, director of professional advancement for NPNFF says, "We don't need to excuse their lives, but we do need to explain their lives."[40]

"Look at the complex lives of these men," adds David Pate, director of the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy. "So many are cohabitating with the mothers, living in very violent situations, holding two or three jobs, been married several times. I think it's important to get into the complexity of men's lives. Until we get into that, men aren't going to be seen as deserving of services."[41]

Pate's remarks identify what is perhaps the biggest obstacle to the expansion of efforts to help fathers: Fatherhood advocates need to convince the public that low-income men deserve help. During the welfare debate, advocates for teen mothers were able to convince a large segment of the public that these young women were often driven to early pregnancy by their limited life choices. With solid research to support them, fathers' advocates could make an equally compelling case that the life circumstances of many young men create a developmental gap between biological fatherhood and committed parenting.

Some fatherhood advocates have raised concerns that such research could do more harm than good, reinforcing the public's negative stereotypes about unwed fathers in general, and black unwed fathers in particular. It is a concern that Kirk Harris understands, but he also points out the potential benefits. "There's been so much discourse on the black family and the institutional factors and historical context that work against them," he says. "I would say the stereotype already exists, and we need a better understanding of what created the context in which it resides."[42]

Finally, while research has helped policymakers recognize how joblessness is linked to fatherlessness, what to do about the problem is far less clear. HHS' Mellgren points out that most programs serving fathers are still very young, and the social services and employment communities have little experience in reaching out to this population.[43]

Recent research by Harry Holzer and Paul Offner of the Georgetown Public Policy Institute highlights very disturbing trends in the employment patterns of young, less-educated African-American men. In 2000 only 52 percent of these young men were employed—down from 62 percent 20 years ago. By contrast, employment rates for white and Hispanic men of the same educational background hover around 80 percent for both groups. In addition, while black males' employment rates were decreasing, employment for black women of the same age and educational level increased. From 1990 to 2000, employment for females in this group increased from 37 percent to 52 percent. This trend, write the researchers, cannot be explained by education or labor market changes alone.[44]

Dr. Jane Knitzer of the National Center for Children in Poverty thinks that what the field needs most is "service practices research." Pointing out that many promising fathers' programs now exist, Knitzer suggests that not enough is known about how well they really work. And, she adds, there are two factors to measure: (1) the impact of interventions on the fathers themselves and (2) the impact on their children. For example, she asks, "When we link fathers to jobs, do their children do better?"[45]

# 4

# Systemic Barriers in Child Support Policy

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Research has played a key role in redefining the terms of the child support debate, establishing that while the average noncustodial father can afford to pay more child support, a substantial minority of noncustodial fathers are themselves living in poverty.[46] Research has also documented how government policies regarding public benefits, child support, and paternity establishment act as disincentives to father involvement.

Child support research is one area where academic research has successfully informed the work of policy organizations such as the National Women's Law Center and the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy. Armed with demonstrated facts, organizations like these have argued for more flexible child support arrangements for low-income families, including forgiving state-related child support debt.

**CHALLENGES:**

As with joblessness, documenting problems in child support enforcement is relatively easy. Fixing the system is harder. Research could play a crucial role here, examining the efficacy of different interventions in the system and testing hypotheses on how to encourage more fathers to pay child support. Such research, however, is at a very early stage, and initial results can be contradictory. For instance, in *Barriers in Child Support Policy* authors Sorensen and Turner write: "Some work shows that increased access to children promotes child support payments, while other research finds no significant relationship between the two."[47]

*As with joblessness, documenting problems in child support enforcement is relatively easy. Fixing the system is harder.*

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# 5

# Co-Parenting

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The research has shown conclusively that women still assume more of the day-to-day responsibilities of raising children than men do, whether couples are married or not. Even though women have expanded their role as income providers, relatively few men have significantly increased their household and child care efforts.[48] "Shared parenting is atypical, even among married parents who live together with their children," writes *Co-Parenting* review author Terry Arendell. When co-parenting occurs, it's often in middle- and upper-class families with highly educated, professional parents who have flexible work schedules.[49]

Emerging research, however, is demonstrating that at least the potential for co-parenting exists among other socioeconomic groups as well. For instance, the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is producing surprising results about the extent to which low-income, unwed fathers support their partners and children through pregnancy and birth. Mincy, whose efforts at the Ford Foundation led to the funding of this study, is encouraged by these findings.

"These ethnographic results," says Mincy, "show that what's happening is not one-night stands, but a process of family formation."[50] Pointing out that 99.8 percent of the expectant fathers said they wanted to be involved in raising their children and 93 percent of the mothers wanted the fathers to be involved in raising the children, Mincy notes, "The men interviewed in the study are talking about how 'we got pregnant' and are looking forward to fatherhood."

**CHALLENGES:**

The research on parenting techniques among families of color and low-income families is sparse and conflicting.[51] This is especially troubling because children growing up in these families are more likely to face economic and social barriers and thus especially need committed and capable parents. More research is needed to document parenting patterns in low-income families and families of color, both to assess the strengths of these families and to determine what interventions could make the families even stronger. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study represents a crucial step in this area.

In addition, research to date has focused on the middle/upper class and the "underclass," while the substantial population of lower-income working parents is often overlooked. This underexamined population is growing as former welfare recipients move into low-wage jobs and new immigrants join the nation's service industries. Generally, both parents in these families work—often at more than one job—to make ends meet. How are responsibilities divided when both parents are employed? What supports do these families call on in caring for their children? These questions are critical to understanding the nature of fatherhood and parenting in today's America.

# 6

# Role Transitions

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Researchers have effectively demonstrated that a father's own social environment—including his family background and employment status—affects his transition to fatherhood.[32] Thus the quality of a marriage both affects and is affected by the father's transition to fatherhood. For younger fathers, these stresses are compounded by the general identity crises of adolescent development.

**CHALLENGES:**

*Role Transitions* literature review author Dr. Will J. Jordan implies that existing research on co-parenting is biased both by researchers' choices to study mostly white, middle- or upper-income, married fathers and by sexist assumptions about the role of fathers in families. Researchers must make special efforts to broaden recruitment and to avoid assumptions about the role of fathers, about fathers' desire to participate in child care, or that "certain topics are relevant only to women."[33] Jordan, who recommends that policies and programs consider families as social units, also notes, "there is no consensus within the research community on whether father training programs significantly ease the transition to fatherhood."[34]

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7

# Intergenerational Learning

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Finally, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to the role that families of origin play in influencing parenting practices. Research has shown that people of all family backgrounds both model and react against their own upbringings.[55] Children's experiences affect both their choice of mates and parenting styles.

And of course, other generations are involved in parenting as well. Especially in immigrant families, where considerable cultural shifts can occur between generations, this distinction is important. Learning can also be bi-directional, with parents learning alongside their young children, as the example of Head Start proves.

One implication of this research: Fathers need workplaces and government systems to help them overcome the stereotypes of fathers as breadwinners rather than caregivers. These organizations can engage in parental education programs and pro-family policies to achieve this goal.

**CHALLENGES:**

Intergenerational learning is perhaps the newest area of focus for the fatherhood field. *Intergenerational Learning* review authors Dr. Vivian Gadsden and Dr. Marcia Hall note that the specific mechanism and actual affects of intergenerational learning and father involvement are difficult to determine.[56] They suggest that researchers increase the number and quality of studies focused on intergenerational learning.

And once again, they point to deficiencies in the number of studies focusing on socioeconomic differences. "Most studies continue to rely on the comparative model in which family formation patterns of white, middle-class families are used as the norm; researchers try to determine how black families 'measure up' to white families," note Gadsden and Hall. "The issues of race, ethnicity, and class are among the least studied areas in intergenerational learning."[57]

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# POLICY:

## Struggling to Address the Needs of Fathers

| ACCOMPLISHMENTS | CHALLENGES |
| --- | --- |
| Broader federal child support policy includes new goals benefiting fathers | Child support policy remains unfriendly to fathers who cannot pay |
| Fatherhood initiatives at federal agencies | Federal funding streams for fathers are underused |
| Welfare-to-Work block grant: the first federal funding source for fathers | Economic downturn threatens to make more families reliant on social services |
| Many new state and community-based fatherhood programs | Most states have yet to make large-scale investments in fatherhood |
| Responsible fatherhood on the 2001 federal legislative agenda | 2002 TANF reauthorization may not include designated funds for fathers |

Armed with research about the importance of fathers, the impact of fatherlessness on children, and the systemic barriers to fatherhood facing many low-income men, fatherhood organizations have become increasingly focused on changing public policy. Beginning in 1996, the National Fatherhood Initiative convened a series of bipartisan task forces on fatherhood promotion; these meetings helped mayors, governors, and members of Congress focus on fatherhood. In the last few years, fatherhood advocates have broadened their focus beyond child support to improve existing federal programs that serve families and create new federal funding streams for fatherhood efforts in states and communities. As a result, responsible fatherhood has become as an established legislative goal at the federal level—both in Congress and the White House.

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# CHILD SUPPORT:
## Where Federal and State Fatherhood Policy Began

### FEDERAL POLICY BEGINS WITH A NARROW PURPOSE

For most of the past quarter century, policy efforts to promote responsible fatherhood have largely focused on collecting payments from noncustodial fathers, especially low-income fathers whose children are on welfare. After the 1988 Family Support Act, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) enacted paycheck withholding for all parents with child support orders, regardless of whether they were delinquent in payments.

The Family Support Act also included the authorization for the first experiments in helping low-income delinquent fathers find employment so that they could better meet their child support obligations. The Young Unwed Fathers Project and Parents' Fair Share, two pilot programs that operated in the early 1990s, aimed to help low-income fathers increase their employment and earnings while also making connections with their children. The two pilots were narrow in scope, however, and resulted in few positive effects on the families they were designed to serve. Thus, federal fatherhood policy continued to focus on collecting payments from delinquent parents.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT: BROADENING THE MISSION OF CHILD SUPPORT POLICY

It was not until the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, which overhauled the welfare system, that federal efforts aimed at fathers broadened to include several new goals: helping low-income fathers develop the tools they need to find jobs, become better parents, and improve their relationships with their children's mothers.

Judge David Gray Ross served as OCSE commissioner for the duration of the Clinton administration was responsible for implementing much of this shift. "Before I came," he says, "this office was just not a father-friendly place. The mission was to collect child support. Now, it's more to provide for financial and emotional support of children."[58]

Ross drew on his experiences as a circuit court judge from Prince George's County, Maryland. From Ross's point of view, it was important not only to identify fathers and explain their responsibilities for their children, but also to tell them about their rights to see their children—and to help ensure those rights. As Ross sees it, "When people are paying for their children, they really take a greater interest."

Under Ross's leadership, the OCSE increased collections while supporting efforts to help fathers improve relationships with their children and the children's mothers. From 1992 through 2000, the department increased collections from $8 billion to $17.9 billion. The number of families receiving support increased from 2.8 million in 1992 to 7.2 million in 2000.[59]

In addition, PRWORA provided $50 million over five years for a block grant to improve access and visitation. OCSE also provided waivers to ten states involved in the Partners for Fragile Families demonstration, allowing them to use federal child support funds to support the project.

### CHALLENGE: POLICY REFORMS STILL NEEDED

Broadening the mission of OCSE will not be sufficient to address the practical issues faced by many noncustodial fathers and families, however. Geraldo Rodriguez is project manager of the Los Angeles Parents' Fair Share program, a county government program to increase the positive involvement of low-income fathers in their children's lives. Rodriguez puts it simply: "Fathers don't come forward because they feel the cards are stacked against them."[60] Many low-income noncustodial fathers, he explains, view the child support system as one that takes them to court and puts them in jail when they don't pay. Courts rarely help them see their children, generally fail to take into account their financial circumstances, and do not recognize their efforts—however minimal—to support their children.

*Fathers don't come forward because they feel the cards are stacked against them.*

A number of research and advocacy organizations, including the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; the Center for Law and Social Policy; the Urban Institute; the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy; and the National Women's Law Center, have examined the plight of low-income fathers and proposed specific ideas for making the child support system more father-friendly.

These research and advocacy groups have highlighted a series of structural problems with the current child support system, including the following:

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- ***State debt.*** Under PRWORA, parents on welfare are required to assign their child support rights to the state, which then collects the money on their behalf, keeping most—if not all—as compensation for the families' welfare costs. This means that fathers of children on welfare often fall into debt with the state. While states have jurisdiction to forgive these debts, only Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, and Missouri actually forgive state debt when fathers participate in or complete a fatherhood program. Minnesota, Oklahoma, and West Virginia will forgive interest owed on child support debt if fathers make regular payments for a given period of time. The National Women's Law Center and the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy have called state debt "one of the most alienating features of the current system."[61]

- ***Pass-throughs.*** PRWORA ended federal funding for the practice of pass-throughs—policies that allowed families on welfare to keep $50 a month out of the child support payments that states collected on their behalf. When federal support for pass-throughs ended, 31 states chose not to pass along to welfare families any of the child support collected on their behalf. As a result, many noncustodial fathers see little incentive to cooperate with the child support system while their children are receiving TANF because their payments go to state government, not to their children. Mothers, too, have no incentive to cooperate when the payments don't benefit their children.

- ***Arrearages.*** Other fathers fail to cooperate because they despair of ever paying all the child support they owe. Many judges make child support payments retroactive to birth, meaning that low-income fathers can find themselves thousands of dollars in debt before their first child support payment ever comes due. The state of New York, however, limits child support arrearages for low-income parents to $500.

- ***No credit for in-kind contributions.*** Federal guidelines also do not consider fathers' in-kind contributions to their children when setting or enforcing awards. Some low-income fathers may try to meet their obligations to ex-partners and children through caregiving, buying food and clothing, or sharing in household responsibilities. But as far as the federal government is concerned when determining whether fathers are meeting their child support obligations, only cash counts.

Until these problems are addressed, it will be difficult to make the child support system work for families. Ironically, failure to address these problems will drive more fathers underground, keeping them away from their families and from job training programs that might help them support their families. As Keith Keplinger of the Eastern Workforce Development Board in Oklahoma notes, "When fathers come in here, they don't even want to give an address. They think, 'Hey, they'll find me.' "[62]

Says John Monahan, former assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "In some sense, there's a substantive consensus that child support is no longer a cost recovery program, but, in fact, a public good. And the law just hasn't caught up. "[63]

### THE U.S. CONGRESS TAKES A FIRST STEP

In 2000 Congress attempted to address one of these issues. The Child Support Distribution Act of 2000, which passed the House of Representatives, outlined new policies modeled after programs in Wisconsin and several other states. The bill would have given states the option to pass-through all child support directly to families.

In a significant move, the bill was amended to include provisions from the 1999 Fathers Count legislation, including over $155 million for new and established fatherhood programs. In the final days of the 106th Congress, the legislation failed for a combination of practical and political reasons. Despite this ultimate disappointment, child support reform gained a great deal of bipartisan support and momentum. In the 107th Congress, U.S. Representative Nancy Johnson and U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe reintroduced the Child Support Distribution Act in both houses.[64]

## BEYOND CHILD SUPPORT: Additional Federal Fatherhood Efforts

### ACCOMPLISHMENT: A NEW FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO FATHERS

As early as 1984, federal officials were thinking of fathers beyond the child support context. But it wasn't until 1995, with the Presidential Executive Memorandum on Fatherhood and the creation of the HHS Fatherhood Initiative, that federal efforts to support and promote fatherhood began in earnest.

Other federal agencies, including the Department of Defense and the Department of Education (DOE), took steps to reach out to fathers as well. DOE, for example, made fathers a target group for its Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, disseminating information about how fathers can help their children succeed in school. The Marines currently sponsor "Baby Boot Camps" at some bases for new and prospective fathers, while the Navy offers services through its New Parent Support Team.

The executive branch also worked with Congress to make federal funds available for employment and training services for low-income fathers—for the first time in history. The 1997 Welfare-to-Work (WtW) block grant, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor, provided $3 billion for job training services for hard-to-employ welfare recipients. Noncustodial fathers whose children received TANF and men who exhibited severe barriers to employment were specifically eligible for services. For the first time, this population was recognized as needy and deserving of services.

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Initially, the inclusion of fathers in the WtW block grant was largely symbolic; eligibility criteria were so strict that few fathers qualified for assistance. In 1999, Congress expanded eligibility for the WtW block grant, allowing any noncustodial father whose child is eligible for federally subsidized health insurance to participate. By 2002, WtW funds were no longer available.

### CHALLENGE: MAKE EXISTING FEDERAL PROGRAMS MORE FATHER-FRIENDLY

These new, multiagency efforts to promote responsible fatherhood are promising. But the larger task is making existing social programs, which are funded by the federal government and administered by the states, work better for fathers. Chief among these programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Workforce Investment Act.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the employment- and income-assistance program created by Congress as part of the 1996 welfare reform law. TANF provides annual block grants to states for cash assistance, employment services, and other supportive services for low-income families, such as child care and transportation. This funding stream is so flexible that states can easily use it to fund fatherhood programs. In 1999 HHS released a guide explicitly telling states how to use TANF funds for fatherhood programs. Yet few states have taken full advantage of these funds.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) also holds promise for serving low-income fathers. WIA, which replaced the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) on July 1, 2000, targets a much larger population than TANF or the Welfare-to-Work block grant—namely, *all* unemployed and underemployed Americans. But while the JTPA program was traditionally considered the main jobs program for "the men," it rarely served the men who most needed help. The Urban Institute estimates that only about six percent of low-income, noncustodial fathers participated in JTPA programs.[65]

Under the JTPA system, local Private Industry Councils traditionally focused their resources on dislocated workers or workers who wanted to upgrade their skills, in part because these workers were easier to serve. Because programs were evaluated on success rates, participants with low skills or poor employment records were unattractive to recruiters.

There are political factors as well. The debate over the Child Support Distribution Act of 2000 was an introduction to a continuing political controversy surrounding fatherhood policy. Conservatives became concerned that some local fatherhood groups would try to meet the marriage promotion requirement by suggesting that because employment increases a person's "marriageability," employment programs could be considered marriage promotion programs. And while women's organizations supported the child support pass-through provisions, some groups continued to object to marriage promotion while others warned that its domestic violence protections were too weak.

President Bush included $315 million over five years for fatherhood programs in his first budget proposal (FY 2002). In addition to the 2001 Child Support Distribution Act, Congress in 2002 was considering bills with similar fatherhood proposals: the Responsible Fatherhood Act, which was introduced in both the Senate and the House, and the more ambitious Strengthening Working Families Act, which was introduced in the Senate.[46]

## ACCOMPLISHMENT: STATES BECOME CRITICAL PARTNERS IN FATHER POLICY

A growing number of states are recognizing and promoting the integral role of fathers in families. Between 1994 and 1999, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty's 1999 edition of *Map and Track*, well over half of the states launched responsible fatherhood initiatives.

These state models vary widely. Some provide services for low-income noncustodial fathers, some focus on early fatherhood prevention, some offer training in parenting skills, and some focus on public awareness. In fact, public awareness has been the most widely used tool for changing public attitudes about fathers. Nevertheless, all of these models emphasize the importance of fathers as members of their families and communities.

In 1996 the Democratic governor of Colorado and the Republican governor of California launched two of the earliest initiatives, helping set a bipartisan tone for state-based efforts. In Colorado, then-Governor Roy Romer released a report on promoting responsible fatherhood, then followed up with a fatherhood summit to cultivate local leaders and help communities learn about programs and funding.

In California, then-Governor Pete Wilson's teen pregnancy prevention effort included an $8 million male involvement program. Wilson also launched a $6 million vertical prosecution strategy for dealing with the problem of statutory rape. The program, which is part of a statewide focus on reducing teenage pregnancy, achieved nearly 4,000 convictions in three years. The governor's office also convened a series of community-based efforts to promote responsible fatherhood.

In other states, such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Texas, the National Fatherhood Initiative has worked with governors to launch fatherhood programs. The Virginia Fatherhood Campaign (VFC), the first state-run fatherhood initiative in the country, is typical of NFI-affiliated efforts.

Working in partnership with NFI, the VFC sponsors a fatherhood public-awareness campaign, relying on substantial donated airtime to get its message across. VFC also contracts with NFI to run a toll-free hotline. Ron Clark, VFC's only full-time staff member, makes dozens of presentations to community groups each year and organizes an annual fatherhood conference. Perhaps most importantly, the state

awards over $200,000 in seed grants each year to community- and faith-based responsible fatherhood programs.

Other state fatherhood initiatives, such as the Florida Commission on Responsible Fatherhood (FCORF), were established by state legislatures. The FCORF was created in 1996 and is funded by $1 million in TANF block grant funds and $500,000 in state dollars each year. The commission has 25 members, including representatives from nonprofits, hospitals, businesses, the judiciary, the legislature, and gubernatorial appointees. The commission makes grants of up to $50,000 to local fatherhood programs. It also holds public meetings, recommends legislation, conducts media campaigns, and sponsors statewide fathers' conferences.

The Georgia Fatherhood Service Network serves more low-income fathers than any other state in the country. The program, run out of the state Department of Human Resources and OCSE, has helped more than 3,500 noncustodial parents find jobs and meet child support obligations. In 2001 another 3,000 parents were enrolled in the program, which includes job training, preparation for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and other supports. In 2001 the program was working to establish partnerships with the state's offices of Public Health and Mental Health and with community-based groups to more effectively address substance abuse and mental illness issues.

At least one state effort, the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative (IFI), was born entirely out of private-sector efforts. IFI was founded in 1997 by David Hirsch, a stockbroker who developed the idea for a statewide fatherhood campaign while looking for ways to reconnect with his own family. Today IFI brings the program Boot Camp for New Dads into Illinois hospitals, provides all new fathers with resource kits, and works with employers to promote family-friendly workplaces.

According to a 2001 comparative review commissioned by the Georgia Fatherhood Program, 35 states reported state-based responsible fatherhood efforts, two states reported privately run fatherhood initiatives, and two states were in the process of launching initiatives.

Hundreds of communities also are engaged in promoting responsible fatherhood. Minneapolis' FATHER program is a Partners for Fragile Families demonstration site that helps men resolve legal barriers to employment, such as problems with child support payments and motor vehicle violations. The Los Angeles Parents' Fair Share program, administered by the county, offers a number of employment, parenting, and domestic violence intervention programs for low-income fathers. The Marion County (Indianapolis) prosecutor's office has developed relationships with 29 area employers, helping place fathers who are behind in their child support payments find permanent jobs. The prosecutor's office also runs a mediation program for noncustodial parents.

## CHALLENGE: INCREASE THE STATE COMMITMENT

The amount of money being invested in state and local efforts, however, is modest in comparison with what it could be. While federal funds are available to states through the Welfare-to-Work block grant, TANF, and WIA, the decision to use these funds for fathers lies with the states.

John Monahan, a former official of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, notes, "It's almost like you've made funding available—you've made water available, but the horse still hasn't drunk."[67] This became obvious in 1999, when the National Center for Children in Poverty published the second edition of *Map and Track*, a follow-up to the 1997 first edition.

The National Center for Children in Poverty's Stanley Bernard, who wrote both editions, says that in the two years between the first and second report, "there was no movement in the states' programs. Many focus on child support payments as a responsibility of fatherhood. . . . There is not enough attention given to fathers as nurturers. We, the practitioners, should be driving states to do more. There doesn't seem to be any initiative."[68]

In the 1999 edition of *Map and Track*, only 29 states reported that they ran employment programs specifically for fathers, using TANF or WtW funds to support most of these efforts.[69] Even when states do tap these resources, the amount states spend on fatherhood programs is insignificant compared to their total welfare budgets.

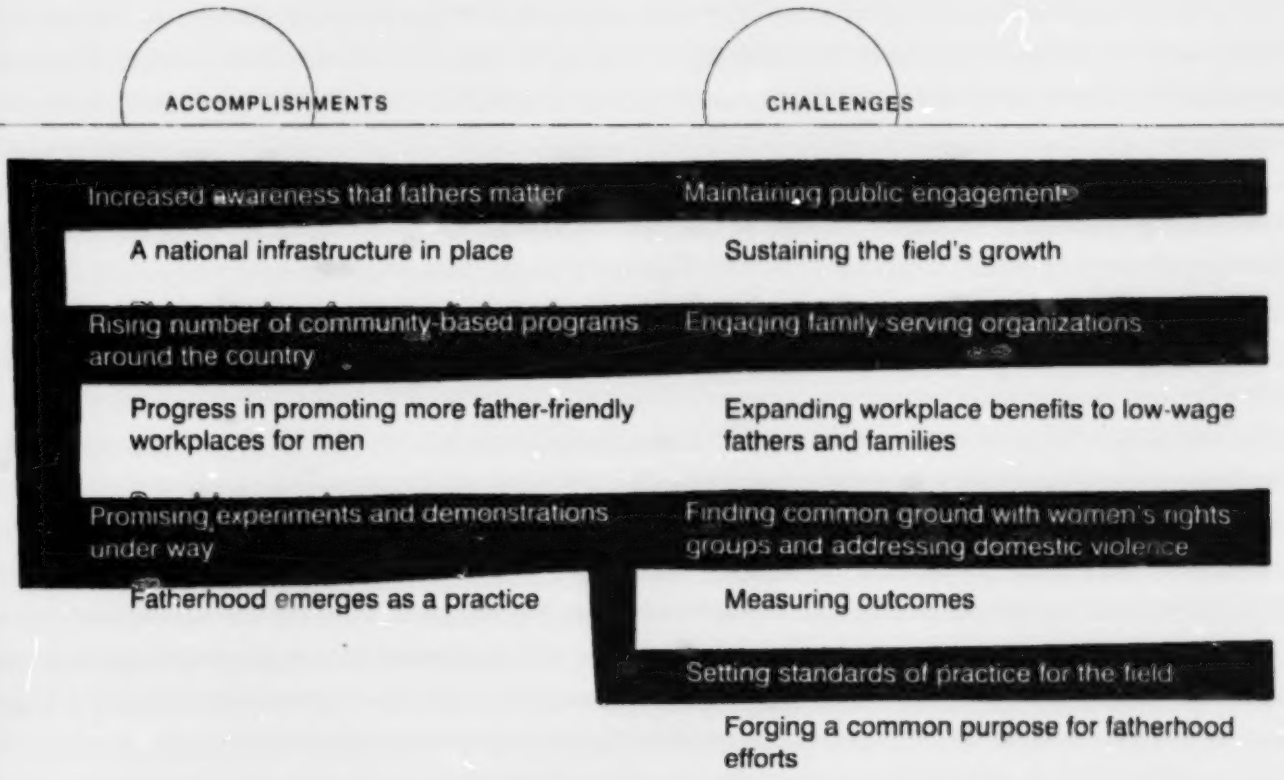
And while many states are using their WtW grants to serve noncustodial parents, only three—Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin—were aggressively targeting their WtW grants to fatherhood programs.[70]

Why are some states reluctant to embrace the fatherhood agenda more fully? One reason is that public funding for fathers' programs breaks a long tradition of "women and children first" in social policy. As more advocates and policymakers propose that funding streams like TANF be directed to support men, family advocacy groups (traditionally working on behalf of women and children) have resisted efforts to use funding for programs for low-income men.

"For so long, we approached 'family policy' as mother-and-child, so any attempt to redefine 'family'—especially when it comes to the distribution of public benefits—is met with resistance," says Annie E. Casey Vice President Ralph Smith.[71] "Even when the [TANF] pie has been expanded," he says, "there is a notion that some money might be less available for women; there is a perception that this is a zero-sum game." Adds James Levine of The Fatherhood Project, "A key to any long-term change is seeing men's and women's interests as interdependent."[72]

# THE FIELD:

## Confronting Its Future


ACCOMPLISHMENTS
CHALLENGES
Increased awareness that fathers matter
Maintaining public engagement
A national infrastructure in place
Sustaining the field's growth
Rising number of community-based programs around the country
Engaging family-serving organizations
Progress in promoting more father-friendly workplaces for men
Expanding workplace benefits to low-wage fathers and families
Promising experiments and demonstrations under way
Finding common ground with women's rights groups and addressing domestic violence
Fatherhood emerges as a practice
Measuring outcomes
Setting standards of practice for the field
Forging a common purpose for fatherhood efforts

Whether fatherhood efforts can properly be labeled as a "field" or a "movement" is a subject of continuing debate among observers and practitioners. Yet regardless of how these efforts are labeled, there is no doubt that in the past quarter century—and particularly in the past decade—the men and women who have worked to advance the notion that fathers are important to their families and communities have made significant progress.

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## Accomplishments Thus Far

### GROWING AWARENESS THAT FATHERS MATTER

Ralph Smith remembers the early days at the Philadelphia Children's Network, "Folks literally laughed out loud when we said we would focus on fathers. In that era of 'deadbeat dads' neither the men themselves nor their issues were deemed worthy of time or attention. Things have changed in the past decade."[73]

In part, this is due to a significant increase in academic research that documents the importance of fathers as parents beyond their traditional roles as providers. Advocates, policymakers, and the media have taken this research to heart and disseminated it to the public. "In 1990 fatherhood was a new notion. Today you won't find people who say fathers should just pay child support," says Brenda Hostetler, formerly of the Danforth Foundation.[74]

As Willis Bright of the Lilly Endowment notes, "The old welfare discussions about fathers put a tail on them and made them the devil. But what also has evolved is a greater sense that men of all backgrounds have an interest in children and, under proper conditions, will be engaged." He says the increasing attention to the role of men in families, as well as events like the Million Man March, have all "contributed to a greater consciousness of the part of men that they need to be engaged with kids, and a recognition of the need to lean on one another."[75]

Indeed, consensus is growing that fathers should take—and are taking—more active roles in their children's lives, not only as economic providers but also as parents. "Men's notions of what it means to be successful as a father have changed over the past 20 to 30 years," says James Levine. "There used to be a focus on being a good provider. Now it's equally being a provider and being involved with the kids. That translates into actual behavior, so that dads today are spending more time with the kids. Moms are still doing more, but the gap has narrowed."

The National Fatherhood Initiative has played a key role in changing notions of fatherhood, publishing a compilation of statistics about fathers, *Father Facts,* in four editions with more than 100,000 copies in print. NFI, the federal government, and an impressive number of state governments have also gotten the word out through public-awareness campaigns in visual and print media. NFI developed and implemented national Ad Council media campaigns in 1995 and in 2001.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's support for public education efforts has been extensive. In addition to supporting NFI's Ad Council campaigns, the Foundation has funded widely disseminated research through NCOFF and two editions of *Map and Track: State Initiatives to Promote Responsible Fatherhood.*

The Foundation also made a major contribution with its 1995 edition of the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*, which focused on father absence and its negative effects on child well-being, provoking an unprecedented amount of media attention for the issue of fathers and families.

From the publication's April release until Father's Day of 1995, major stories appeared in both print and electronic media. The National Center for Fathering coordinated the highly successful Father's Day Campaign with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and developed a media packet with national and community-based examples of programs and initiatives that support father involvement. Significant print and electronic media coverage reached more than 15 million people during Father's Day week, including articles in such other leading newspapers as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*.

While media attention has been less intense in subsequent years, the coverage continues to reflect a growing appreciation for the importance of fathers. A Lexis-Nexis search of newspapers and news magazines for the year 2000 produced more than 150 stories on fatherhood. These articles differed from those that emerged in 1995 in that they focused on a broader range of fatherhood issues, ranging from the growing numbers of stay-at-home fathers, to fathers' influence on school achievement and the plight of divorced fathers struggling for visitation rights.

Nevertheless, improved news coverage about fathers has yet to fully permeate popular culture. In 2000 NFI issued a report on how fathers are portrayed on primetime television. The report, *Fatherhood and Television*, indicated that fathers were eight times more likely to be portrayed negatively in terms of good-parenting indicators—such as involvement, engagement, guidance, competence, and placing priority on being a parent—as mothers.

Another goal on the responsible fatherhood agenda is creating a more father-friendly workplace. The Fatherhood Project® conducted research on the business benefits of father involvement and on promising practices for changing the workplace, which resulted in the 1997 book, *Working Fathers: New Strategies for Balancing Work and Family*. Their efforts also include producing a PBS documentary segment, "Juggling Family and Work"; consulting and making presentations to over 100 companies; researching the needs of "working poor" fathers; and identifying promising practices in the private and public sectors for meetings those needs.

## A NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE

This growing public awareness has been complemented—and fueled—by the creation of a series of national intermediary organizations that support the efforts of researchers, practitioners, and fathers themselves. Such intermediary organizations include NCOFF, NPNFF, the National Center for

Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL), NFI, the National Center for Fathering, and the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy.

From the beginning, foundations, especially Annie E. Casey, Ford, and Mott, have been instrumental in creating these intermediaries and enabling them to grow. When Ralph Smith joined the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1994, the Foundation provided additional funding for NCOFF, which now operates out of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education as a practice-driven research center and clearinghouse for fatherhood issues.

After playing a key role in organizing the 1994 Family Re-Union on fatherhood, Ralph Smith sought to replicate the experience of the practitioners who had gathered in Nashville for the first time. So in 1995, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, joined by the Ford Foundation, the Danforth Foundation, and the Mott Foundation, became a core supporter of the NPNFF, the national membership organization for fatherhood practitioners.

NPNFF was first based at The Fatherhood Project® of the Families and Work Institute and later at the NPCL. Since its inception, the organization has struggled to develop an autonomous identity, to secure a strong financial base, and to broaden its membership base. But NPNFF became a fully independent organization in September 1999, and its revitalization under the leadership of Executive Director Preston Garrison has been an important development in the fatherhood field.

The Ford Foundation also provided core support for a series of new intermediary organizations. Ronald Mincy says that when he joined the Ford Foundation his goal was to create entities that would "study, network, organize, and communicate around the idea that child support is not just about collecting money, but about the entire child."[76] To that end, the Foundation began support for the Partners for Fragile Families demonstration (PFF) in 1996.

PFF is a pilot program in ten cities that targets young, unwed, low-income fathers to help them resolve child support problems, learn to be better parents, and prepare for jobs. Two PFF sites—Baltimore

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and Racine, Wisconsin—are developing "team parenting" and domestic violence intervention programs to work with both fathers and mothers.

Other foundations, including the Lilly Endowment in Indianapolis, the Rose and Denver Foundations in Denver, and the Philadelphia Foundation, help fund individual sites. To help all these sites improve services to low-income fathers and change the way child support enforcement agencies treat them, the Ford Foundation established the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership, run by Dr. Jeffery Johnson, as the technical assistance intermediary for the ten sites.

At the local level, the PFF sites try to promote working partnerships between community-based organizations and state child support agencies. Ronald Mincy cites Racine, Wisconsin, where Jerry Hamilton runs Children Up Front, as an example. Under the old system, the state child support agency would help fathers find jobs, check back three weeks later to ensure that they were still working, and then declare success. Now, Hamilton's organization, which is part of Goodwill Industries, works in 43 Wisconsin counties to expand the mission of the child support agencies. Staff members ensure that fathers not only work and pay child support, but also stay involved with their children.

Under Ronald Mincy's stewardship, Ford also created the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy (CFFPP) to help develop regulatory and legislative options for policymakers who want to make child support, workforce development, and other government systems more effective in helping families. Director David Pate identifies CFFPP's current mission as "working with women's groups and addressing domestic violence and how we can find common ground. Women's groups see us as a place of comfort. . . . We're very much a feminist organization."[77]

Pate's organization is working with the National Women's Law Center to produce a series of three *Common Ground* reports. The first report, "Family Ties: Improving Paternity Establishment Practices and Procedures for Low-Income Mothers, Fathers, and Children," made a number of recommendations about paternity establishment. Future reports will address child support awards, increasing family income, as well as custody and visitation issues.

Finally, the Ford Foundation supported the replication of Charles Ballard's Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization project in six cities. Ballard developed the program in Cleveland in 1982, drawing upon his own experiences as an unwed father and his subsequent success mentoring other men. Ed Pitt of The Fatherhood Project® lauds the program for "its strong impact on the men involved because it expresses community values and community expectations."[78]

The program uses an intensive, one-on-one approach to connecting fathers with families by recruiting volunteer couples that model healthy marriage practices in their own communities. The institute reports serving more than 7,000 fathers nationwide in cities including Milwaukee, Nashville, San Diego,

Washington, D.C., and Yonkers, N.Y. In recent years, the program has added sites in Indianapolis, Philadelphia, and Harlem, N.Y., as well as several in Texas.

Another organization whose fatherhood efforts are making strides is the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI). While all fatherhood organizations have targeted audiences, NFI's mission is an especially ambitious one: to stimulate a broad-based movement to restore fatherhood as a national priority. Founded by Dr. Wade Horn and Don Eberly in 1994, NFI characterizes its mission as two-fold. First, the organization seeks to broaden society's narrow focus on fathers' responsibility as economic providers. As Horn has noted, financial support "is neither the only nor the most important role that fathers play. If we want fathers to be more than just money machines, we will need a public policy that supports their work as nurturers, disciplinarians, mentors, moral instructors, and skill coaches, and not just as economic providers."[29]

In addition to its public-awareness efforts, NFI works directly with policymakers and with communities. NFI organizes conferences, bipartisan congressional task forces, and community fatherhood forums; provides resource materials to organizations seeking to establish support programs for fathers; and conducts research on fatherhood. When President Bush chose NFI President Wade Horn to be HHS Assistant Secretary for Family Support in 2001, NFI named Roland C. Warren as NFI president.

NFI strongly supports marriage as the most reliable way to promote responsible fatherhood. This viewpoint has alienated some women's rights groups and some of the more liberal advocates for children and families. Other advocacy groups, including the Association for Children for Enforcement of Support, the Independent Women's Forum, and Concerned Women for America, support marriage promotion. Controversy notwithstanding, NFI's prominence in the fatherhood movement has ensured that the marriage debate remains at the center of fatherhood policy discussions. Indeed, President Bush's 2002 welfare reform proposal called for spending $300 million over five years for marriage promotion activities.

President Bush's 2003 budget proposal called for $20 million in funding for faith-based and community organizations to assist noncustodial fathers in becoming more involved in their children's lives. The president also suggested child support provisions that included granting states the option of giving former welfare families a full pass-through of child support payments and supplying federal funding matches that would help provide up to $100 per month in child support to welfare families.

***Because of these efforts, community-based fatherhood programs are being initiated across the country.***

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While fatherhood efforts were once narrowly focused on low-income unmarried fathers—and the harmful effects of father absence—NFI's contributions have helped redirect discussions to emphasize fathers as assets to their families. In addition, organizations such as NFI and the Kansas City-based National Center for Fathering have helped move the fatherhood debate into the mainstream by focusing on the responsibilities of fathers of all economic and social classes.

In addition to these major fatherhood intermediaries, a variety of smaller organizations across the country are serving fathers and families and creating new models for success. These include such organizations as Minnesota Early Learning Development; the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development; and the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute. *(For a list of major fatherhood organizations, see page 76.)*

Because of these efforts, community-based fatherhood programs are being initiated across the country. Preston Garrison of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families estimated that in early 2002, there were as many as 2,500 community-based projects operating in the U.S.

## Challenges for the Fatherhood Field

### SUSTAINING THE FIELD'S GROWTH

Many local practitioners, however, remain isolated and underfunded. As Dr. Vivian Gadsden points out, NCOFF published a directory of fatherhood programs in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1999 and within one year, "many of the programs that were on the original list closed their doors."[80]

Government and foundations are far and away the largest source of funds for low-income family programs. The Mott Foundation's Lorin Harris worries that without foundation support, the field will not be able to sustain its policy work related to welfare families and low-income men. "Funding for child support enforcement will continue," says Harris, "But the same may not be the case for programs that encourage father involvement."[81]

As Dr. Ken Canfield of the National Center for Fathering notes, "The movement is still largely foundation-driven."[82] With the Ford Foundation's decision to cease funding Strengthening Fragile Families as an initiative in 2002, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation devoting increasing resources to its neighborhood revitalization efforts, some worry that foundation support may ebb, and fatherhood groups may have a tough time raising money. Indeed, one of the key members of the funders' collaborative for fathers, the Danforth Foundation, shifted priorities and no longer funds national fatherhood efforts. And in 2002, Lorin Harris, one of the leading proponents of philanthropic support for fatherhood efforts, left the Mott Foundation.

*Family leave, family-friendly workplaces, and telecommuting are making it easier for some fathers to spend time with their children.*

If foundation support wanes, it's likely to affect poor fathers most dramatically. Kirk Harris of Family Support America points out that middle-class fathers—and perhaps more importantly, their employers—are getting the message that family matters. Family leave, family-friendly workplaces, and telecommuting are making it easier for some fathers to spend time with their children. In a tight labor market, middle-class fathers have the clout to push for family-friendly policies, and employers have the incentive to grant their demands. This dynamic is unlikely to change if foundation support for fatherhood groups erodes. Low-income fathers, on the other hand, lack the leverage that middle-class fathers enjoy in the workplace. The Fatherhood Project® has recognized this issue, and is beginning work with companies that employ low-wage earning fathers (and mothers) to identify their needs and pursue promising family supports.

One positive trend is the increasing philanthropic interest at the state and community level. In Texas, with leadership from the Hogg Foundation and the Center for Public Policy Priorities, the Texas Fragile Families Initiative (TFF) was launched in 1999. Its purpose was to replicate in Texas the work of the national Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative.

Unlike the national initiative, however, the Texas effort was funded—and planned—locally. When Dr. Marion Coleman of the Hogg Foundation set out to introduce the idea in Texas, it was clear that no single foundation could support such a project. With the Hogg Foundation playing the role of recruiter and convener, 27 foundations joined in an effort to raise about $5 million to support 12 demonstration sites for three years.

Project Director Michael Hayes says the foundations understood from the outset that they would not be able to sustain the project indefinitely and that public support would be necessary at some point. They also understood that if their efforts were to succeed, they would need to able to influence public policy. As a result, state agency officials were involved with TFF from the outset.

"The ideas for initiative were state officials' ideas as much as ours," says Hayes. He notes that state officials from the Attorney General's Office, the Health Department, the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, and the Texas Youth Commission reviewed the project design and served on grant review committees.

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As a result of the agencies' new understanding of the lives of low-income unmarried fathers, Hayes says state agencies have been more receptive to changing policies and serving fathers. The juvenile justice agency, for example, now allows young fathers in state custody to receive visits from their children, and child support officials offer town hall meetings for non-custodial parents to explain their rights.

Texas is not the only state in which local philanthropy is playing a key role in fatherhood efforts. In South Carolina, the Columbia-based Sisters of Charity Foundation in engaged in a multi-year, $6 million project to support community-based fatherhood programs that strengthen fatherhood and the role of fathers in the family. The initiative, called Reducing Poverty Through Father Engagement, is funding more than a dozen local efforts across the state, especially in high-poverty communities.

Community Foundations are now paying attention to fathers as well. In 1996 the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) sponsored Father's Day events across the country. Since that time, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CCFY has continued to provide small grants for community-based fatherhood efforts. For example, with a $1,000 grant from CCFY, the Fort Collins Community Foundation organized "A Day in the Park with Dad"—an event designed to send a message to fathers that there are inexpensive ways to spend time with their children.

In 1998 CCFY published *Fathers Matter*, a handbook with ideas for community foundation involvement in fatherhood issues; a revised edition was published in 2001. And at a November 2000 Fatherhood Institute for community foundations, representatives from more than two dozen community foundations spent several days learning about strategies for promoting responsible fatherhood in their communities. In 2002 the Hewlett Foundation supported CCFY in a similar convening of California community foundations.

A number of foundations, including Ford, Mott, and Annie E. Casey, also have supported important new work with groups of fathers with unique needs. These funders have jointly supported the Johns Hopkins University Center for American Indian and Alaskan Native Health. Since 1998, the center has been developing strategies, in partnership with native communities, to strengthen teen-formed American-Indian families.

Based on a strategy developed in five pilot communities on the Navajo, White Mountain Apache, and Gila River reservations, the center uses a home-visiting model to help young fathers and their families overcome psychosocial barriers to father involvement, to gain emotional support from their families and communities, and to connect the young fathers to support services that will improve their quality of life, particularly employment.

And with as many as 1.5 million children in the United States growing up with a parent—generally a father—in prison, a number of foundations, including Mott, support efforts to help fathers who are in prison or are ex-offenders. President Bush's 2003 budget included a proposal for $25 million in grant money to faith- and community-based groups for mentoring children of prisoners.

### ENGAGING FAMILY-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Foundation dollars—and even government funds—will not be sufficient to weave father involvement into the social fabric as long as fatherhood remains separate from the agendas of organizations that serve families. To ensure that father involvement remains on the social policy agenda, advocates need to target one population in particular for intensive retraining: the social-service practitioners who, over the course of 30 years, have gotten used to seeing families without fathers.

Tené Wells, former president of NPNFF, says retraining is necessary, "because it has the ability to make other family-service programs much more holistic. It really talks about the biological makeup of the family and so it strengthens those other programs."[83]

Yet for many social-service practitioners—whether they work in government agencies, Head Start centers, or community-based organizations—there is still a strong sense that "family support" is about mothers and children. The idea of serving men is new and radical.

So, while research is beginning to demonstrate that men are valuable assets to their children, some frontline workers continue to resent the time and effort and resources they must invest in young men whose behavior and attitudes—and even appearance—they do not like. Indeed, some of those on the frontlines have had their own problems with men. As Ralph Smith notes, "There are a large number of practitioners who are women who say, 'This man looks like the guy who is my problem.'"[84]

Edward Pitt adds, "Parent involvement is the hallmark of Head Start, yet these programs are not evaluated, rewarded, or penalized on whether or not they engage fathers."[85] Encouragement from foundations could help groups like the National Head Start Association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Child Welfare League of America make fathers as much a part of their core constituency as mothers. "It's not part of their mission," says Pitt, "they have endorsed fatherhood but not embraced it."

One of the organizations taking the lead to address this issue is NPNFF. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and others, NPNFF has created a faculty of experienced practitioners who work with family-serving organizations to help them learn how to integrate fatherhood into their agendas. As Ralph Smith notes, the emergence of the new fatherhood track at meetings of groups such as Family Support America and the National Head Start Association signals the beginning of a change in attitudes about fathers by those organizations.

Since the inception of NPNFF's National Conference Fatherhood Workshop Track project in January 2000, over 100 workshops have been presented at 40 national conferences, including major tracks at the Family Support America 2000 Conference, National Head Start Conferences, and at the 2000 and 2001 International Fatherhood Conferences.

### FINDING COMMON GROUND WITH WOMEN'S GROUPS

For the fatherhood agenda to really take root, more advocacy groups that traditionally advocate for the rights and well-being of women and children must join the chorus of voices speaking out about the importance of fathers. And for that to occur, women and men must deal with the tensions that surround two issues: marriage and domestic violence.

Organizations such as NFI and the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood urge marriage promotion as a crucial part of public policy. Many women's groups counter that marriage promotion could keep women and their children in abusive living situations and that a "marriage-first" bias would discriminate against those for whom marriage is not a practical option, including some single parents of both genders and gay couples. Lisa Nkonoki, founder of Dads Do Make a Difference, makes this point: "I'm all for marriage, but do a reality check. Some of these women, like me, have kids with two or three fathers. If you think marriage is the solution, which one of the fathers is the one you should marry?"[86]

Some groups fear that, if marriage promotion becomes a major component of government programs, single parents could face discrimination in federal and state social services. Says Kirk Harris, "My concern is that the ultimate progression of this is that the ability to gain social benefits will be based on marital status. . . . While I'm a strong supporter of marriage, I don't think it should be the threshold of eligibility for social benefits. I don't want to add additional stigma and burdens to families, more than they already have."[87]

This fear of discrimination includes another dimension when one considers that African Americans and Latinos are more likely to have children out of wedlock than whites.[88] As Harris notes, "Embedded in the marriage issue are issues of race and class. In the context of welfare and social policy, the marriage camps are traditionally more white and more conservative."[89]

Still, marriage proponents are unwavering. "All available evidence suggests that the most effective pathway to involved, committed, and responsible fatherhood is marriage," NFI's Dr. Wade Horn testified before Congress in 1999. "Federal legislation must clearly promote married fatherhood as the ideal."[90] After Horn became Assistant Secretary for Children and Families in 2001, the president reflected Horn's view in his 2003 budget by setting aside $100 million for states to explore ways of reducing out-of-wedlock births by encouraging marriage. Funding would be used for programs such as premarital education, assisting couples in struggling marriages, and education campaigns that focus on the importance of marriage.

In addition, the President's 2002 welfare reform plan called for spending $300 million on marriage promotion over five years but did not seek any specific funding for other activities to promote responsible fatherhood, such as education and training programs to help men get jobs and enable them to pay child support.

David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values is a strong supporter of marriage promotion. Yet he remains uncertain about the extent public policy can effectively promote marriage. He cites the bipartisan momentum for the removal of legal disincentives to marriage as a step in the right direction. The latest tax reforms ended the so-called marriage penalty in the IRS code, and prospects are good for a parallel action regarding penalties in the Earned Income Tax Credit. Asked what else public policy could do to encourage marriage, he responds: "I don't think anybody's really that sure."[91]

But one possible strategy, according to Blankenhorn, is an early intervention plan for new parents. If the early data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study proves correct—that for many parenting couples, fathers are present at birth, the parents are romantically involved, and at least one partner really wants to get married—he asks: "What if these families could be connected to supports in the community—like churches or other organizations—that could help them realize their goal of getting married? Currently no one is helping them do that or encouraging them that it's the right thing to do or referring them to services."[92]

Responsible fatherhood is on the agenda of a number of legislative proposals, from child support to social security and immigration, and while no major policy proposal succeeded in 2001, prospects were good that a proposal would be included in the reauthorization of welfare reform, a policy area where fatherhood promotion is often addressed.

The marriage debate is not likely to be settled soon. One promising development, however, is that discussions are continuing, and new participants are joining them. Groups engaged in the fatherhood policy debate now include organizations such as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). In 1999 CLASP established the Resource Center on Couples and Marriage Policy, headed by Theodora Ooms.

Foundations, especially Annie E. Casey and Ford, have led the way in creating neutral ground for advocates to discuss tough issues like marriage promotion. Leaders in the fatherhood field point out that these foundations are far better suited than government to facilitate such efforts. Ralph Smith admits, "Even if we can't solve the marriage issue, we must confront it."

Nancy Duff Campbell, copresident of the National Women's Law Center, suggests that a softening on the issue is likely because the public understands that the marriage question is complicated. She points out that in 1996, the public supported welfare reform because of the inherent unfairness of having some women stay home while others received subsidies to stay home. Many Americans thought, "I'm working—they should be working." Today, Campbell says, "I don't think the public is saying, 'I'm married—they should be married.' "[93]

Noting that most practitioners support the pragmatic solution of encouraging cohabitation as a first step, David Blankenhorn suggests that compromise will be the likely result of the debate. In the end, he says, "I think that the two approaches—marriage and cohabitation—will coexist."

## ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

While the debate over marriage attracts the most attention, domestic violence is by far the more serious obstacle facing the fatherhood field.

As Blankenhorn says plainly: "There's a huge weakness we've had [in the fatherhood movement]—we don't know how to respond to the issue of domestic violence." Dr. Horn has gone on the record against domestic violence, saying, "The presence of domestic violence should be used to convince couples not to get married."[94] There is, however, some debate over cohabitation versus marriage, with some fatherhood groups asserting that husbands are less likely than boyfriends to be abusers. Other marriage advocates are reluctant to make such a claim, including David Blankenhorn, who says, "that argument hasn't worked for me or anyone else."[95]

*As many as 60 percent of women on public assistance report a history of abuse; as many as 30 percent are currently victims of domestic violence.*

Jacqueline Payne of the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund says that, while her organization had other strong concerns about federal promotion of marriage as proposed in the Fathers Count legislation, the main reason that NOW opposed the Fathers Count bill was domestic violence. The statistics that they cited were chilling: As many as 60 percent of women on public assistance report a history of abuse; as many as 30 percent are currently victims of domestic violence. "For these women and their children," Payne wrote, "reunification could be a death sentence."[96]





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Oliver Williams of the University of Minnesota School of Social Work's Center on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community, who has been researching domestic violence for years, says the subject is one that most of the fatherhood field resists addressing. "People want to rehabilitate fathers so they can be with their children ... [but] it's easier for them to talk about substance abuse and joblessness than about domestic violence," says Williams. "And they'd rather talk about mutual violence rather than male responsibility." Williams suggests that it is time "to deconstruct the issue of mutual violence—it's misleading. The level of abuse that women initiate is clearly different than the violence that men initiate. Women and men may hit each other as much, but it's not the same. Women are hurt more—and more often."[97]

Yet Williams also says that women's groups often paint the picture too broadly—alleging that all men are dangerous. Both Payne and Williams suggest there is a long way to go before the issue is even honestly debated. Right now, says Payne, "We are talking past each other."[98]

## MEASURING SUCCESS

One of the greatest challenges to the fatherhood field is the general perception that nothing seems to work. The two national fatherhood demonstrations did not show promising results. While a handful of their sites had modest successes, most of the Young Unwed Fathers and Parents' Fair Share sites fell far short of their goals.

Parents' Fair Share (PFS) was the more widely publicized disappointment of the two. Designed by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and funded by federal and state governments as well as foundations, the program operated at seven sites, starting in 1994. The pilot lasted about two years, but many of these sites continue to operate today with different funding streams.

The basic design was simple yet comprehensive: In exchange for current and future cooperation with the child support system, noncustodial parents (98 percent of them men) received services to help them find more stable, higher-paying jobs; pay child support on a consistent basis; and assume a fuller parental role. Services provided included peer support groups, job placement services, intensive case management, job training and education, and mediation between custodial and noncustodial parents. While enrolled in PFS, fathers' child support obligations were lowered until they found work or unless they failed to meet program requirements.

Unfortunately, the pilot did not make overall significant progress in meeting its three goals: increasing fathers' employment and earnings, child support payments, and involvement with their children. Three sites did show some progress at meeting one or another of the goals, but in general fathers who participated did not tend to work more, earn more, pay more child support, or visit their children more frequently than fathers in the control group.

John Monahan, a former official of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, says the big question after Parents' Fair Share is: "What's next? ... How do you build publicly funded next steps when you don't have good results?"[99]

Similarly, Blankenhorn warns that without some measurable positive results for fatherhood programs, public commitment will fade. "Unless there is evidence that specific interventions are going to improve the well-being of children through investing in their relationships with fathers, this thing will just kind of fizzle out."[100]

So far, high-quality, positive evaluations of fatherhood programs are limited. Case Western Reserve University reviewed the structure and services of Charles Ballard's Cleveland program some years ago in what was called a "reactive evaluation." The study indicated that participants interviewed had more positive attitudes, good high school completion rates, higher employment rates, and better relationships with their children and the mothers of their children.

But the Case Western study was not a rigorous evaluation. The Department of Labor also praised the program for its creation of a curriculum and resources for helping fathers, but the DOL assessment did not point to any measurable results. The ten sites of the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative will be evaluated in time, but because the programs received federal waivers later than planned, enrollments in many programs were slow. By mid-2002, the initiative had produced little in the way of quantifiable results.

Mindful of the need for accountability, some fatherhood organizations are working hard to help local programs to measure and document successes that the public and policymakers can appreciate. The National Fatherhood Initiative, for example, helps states and communities determine how to measure the success of fatherhood programs.

## SETTING STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR THE FIELD

If fatherhood programs are to grow and flourish, some professionalization of the fatherhood field needs to occur, particularly at the practitioner level. As Lorin Harris of the Mott Foundation notes, "There is still no clear direction from either federal government or philanthropy about what best practices look like."[101] In addition to providing guidance to policymakers, a set of promising and effective practices could lead to standards and possibly certification of fatherhood practitioners.

Says Vivian Gadsden, "We need information on whether the efforts are working, in what ways, and for whom. In addition, we know little about the effects of programs on fathering behaviors. I have focused on effects rather than impact because focusing on effects allows us to see both what happened and how it happened."

Some organizations are addressing this problem. NCOFF has produced a set of fathering indicators by gathering information from programs and communities while also utilizing Child Trends' work on federal data sets. In addition, HHS' Responsible Fatherhood Management Information System is being used in a number of local fatherhood programs, according to NPNFF's Preston Garrison. Nevertheless, the field has not moved very far toward establishing best practices or standardizing program approaches. Says Garrison, "These tasks have to be accomplished if the field expects to be able to attract long-term funding from states, from the federal government, or from private sources, such as foundations or United Ways."[102]

An important component of setting standards for the field will be practitioner involvement. Most practitioners and program managers in the responsible fatherhood field now recognize that standards for programs and practice are essential. The challenge is to work with,providers in the field's grassroots base, making standards that reflect the learned realities of fatherhood practice. Ideally, these standards would help programs improve delivery of services while meeting the results-oriented needs of funders and policymakers. Notes Preston Garrison, "That will be more likely to happen if practitioners are actively involved in the development process."

## FORGING A COMMON PURPOSE FOR FATHERHOOD EFFORTS

When Ralph Smith convened a meeting of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Fathers and Families grantees in September 1999, he affirmed the Foundation's "big tent" approach to grantmaking in the area. "Whether we succeed in lifting up responsible fatherhood as an important target of public policy depends upon whether the folks in this room are able to acknowledge, discuss, and move beyond the ideological differences. Our task is to forge connections, relationships, and networks strong enough to translate differences into challenges and challenges into strengths. This meeting is about creating the space for that work."[103]

This progress, however, still has not produced a common agenda among major fatherhood groups, or even a common sense of purpose. David Hirsch of the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative says of the field, "There's a leadership

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vacuum. There are pockets of energy, but no unified agenda. There's still a fair amount of competition among these organizations."[104]

*If we could get men behind a children's agenda—whether related to health or related to education—and got men collaring legislators . . . you'd see some changes.*

One area in which competition occurs is in funding. Though there are increasing federal and philanthropic dollars available for fatherhood projects, competition among organizations has not abated. When the Fathers Count legislation was pending, it included a $15 million set-aside for three fatherhood groups to conduct projects "of national significance." The funding was intended for NFI, the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization (IRFFR), and NPCL.

After the defeat of Fathers Count, only NFI and IRFFR received funding in the FY 2001 budget—$3 million from the Department of Justice and $500,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services respectively. The singling out of these groups in fatherhood legislation caused resentment among other organizations.

Recognizing the need to overcome tensions in the field, the Annie E. Casey and Ford Foundations have created venues to keep the various factions of the fatherhood field—often competitive and suspicious of one another—talking about common goals. The Casey Foundation's annual grantee meetings aim to create a forum for fatherhood groups to meet and exchange ideas. The Foundation's efforts in 2002 to help fatherhood groups craft a common agenda for fathers and welfare reform began a process worth continuing. And Ford's Common Ground project brings together fatherhood organizations and women's groups, initiating a dialogue about common agendas.

Says Willis Bright of the Lilly Endowment, "I would also like to see the different elements of the men's movement—whether it's Christian men's groups, groups that work with noncustodial fathers, divorcing fathers, or very progressive fathers—I'd like to see all of them come together and take on an advocacy agenda on behalf of children. That's one of my biggest wishes. If we could get men behind a children's agenda—whether related to health or related to education—and got men collaring legislators and saying 'We want these programs for our kids,' you'd see some changes. . . . When legislators get the guy next door coming to say, 'hey, we need to do this' . . . that would be a very powerful thing."[105]

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Preston Garrison of NPNFF agrees: "The members of NPNFF who work mostly in local fatherhood programs certainly hope that the field can become a strong 'movement' to support changes in policy and increase assistance for fathers who want to support their children. But we aren't there yet. The various organizations that have grown up at the national level are still sorting out where they stand on political and philosophical issues, and have yet to really coalesce around a unified set of principles or strategies."[106]

Edward Pitt, who is associate director of The Fatherhood Project® and senior research associate at the Families and Work Institute, has worked with fathers for more than 15 years. In all that time, says Pitt, efforts on behalf of fathers have largely been a reaction to other social policy agendas. In the late 1970s, says Pitt, it was teen pregnancy prevention and male responsibility; by the mid-80s, it was black men and male responsibility. And now he says, it's welfare reform and workplace demographics. Today, Pitt says, there is a tremendous amount of activity on the fatherhood front, but he asks: "Who is generating its theme? What does success look like?"[107]

John Monahan notes how even at a time when some fatherhood movement proponents are advancing a larger cultural transformation, "they need to come up with a common agenda on how they would spend federal money. If you can hang together to get a consensus ... use the moment of ideological coalition and focus on five policy changes to help the least-able families. I'd advise them all to get in a room and make a list of five things they agree on. This isn't an opportunity that comes along very often."[108]

## Looking Ahead

The fatherhood agenda has come a long way from its beginnings in Tom Henry's community recreation centers and Charles Ballard's hospital waiting rooms. The future is full of promise.

Still, the tasks facing fatherhood advocates are formidable. Fathers' advocates must maintain the attention of federal and state policymakers if they are to build on the infrastructure they have constructed. In the short-term, while public resources at both the federal and state levels are scarce, they must continue to find support from foundations. They must use the limited funds they receive wisely by heeding the findings of research and the insights of practitioners. Finally, they must seek common ground—with adversaries and within the movement—and resolve some of the tensions that sometimes threaten to undermine their efforts.

In confronting these challenges, each component of the fatherhood field has a role:

- The research community must continue its newfound emphasis on the roles of fathers within families, while working to expand investigations beyond the factors that impede father involvement in low-income families. Research now has provided a fairly clear picture of why many low-income men find it difficult to parent. Additional research is needed to learn what will help them do better. Special attention should be paid to neglected areas of research, such as middle-class minority families, lower-class white families, and families affected by domestic violence. Also, in this era of performance-based governance, researchers will need to partner with practitioners to measure outcomes for participating men and their families. Without this data, efforts to legislate, fund, and reproduce fatherhood programs will be vulnerable to opposition.

- Federal and state policymakers need to bolster their responsible fatherhood rhetoric with significant and strategic investments to support father involvement, particularly among low-income men. Whether they invest in programs aimed specifically at men or incorporate new father-focused practices into programs that traditionally have served women and children, policymakers must ensure that fathers, especially those in fragile families, receive continued attention. In addition to new strategies such as promoting healthy and stable marriages, these efforts should recognize that the obstacles facing many low-income fathers are as great as those of former welfare mothers. Thus, efforts to help fathers should include strategies that have succeeded in helping low-income mothers. These include education, job training and placement, income supports, life skills training, health care, and substance abuse and mental health treatment.

- Foundations must sustain and build upon their already impressive efforts to develop the fatherhood field. With so many fatherhood organizations still fairly young and not well-established, foundation support is critical to the near-term survival of the field – and to its long-term survival. And at a time when funds are scarce and the needs of the field are great, foundations must be willing to make hard choices by supporting only those programs and organizations that use their funding effectively to benefit families and to leverage policy changes.

- Fatherhood groups face the toughest challenges of all. Whether they focus on advocacy, policy development, or direct services, all struggle with issues of whom they should represent, what their approaches should be, how closely they should partner with other organizations, and how they can survive and grow in the years to come. In resolving these issues, fatherhood groups may find that their greatest strength lies in relationships with each other—in sharing the talents, insights, and dedication of the hundreds of people who have already made connecting fathers and families their life's work.

# The Fatherhood 'Field':

## 1975

**January 4:**
President Gerald Ford signs into law the Social Services Amendments of 1974, requiring states to establish child support programs that provide services to welfare families and may provide services to nonwelfare families. States must attempt to locate absent parents, establish paternity, determine child support orders, and enforce payment awards. The legislation results from congressional concern that lack of support from fathers forces families to unnecessarily rely on welfare.

**Also that year...**
In his literature review entitled *Fathers: Forgotten Contributors to Child Development*, Dr. Michael Lamb asserts that the father's main role is a socialization role, introducing the child to the world beyond the home.

In his Ford Foundation-supported book, *Who Will Raise the Children? New Options for Fathers (and Mothers)*, Dr. James Levine examines barriers to father involvement that are deeply ingrained in American culture, law, social structures, and research traditions. He calls for changes to enhance father involvement, provide equal employment opportunities for women, and ensure positive outcomes for children. The book wins the Family Life Book Award of the Child Study Association of America and leads Levine to seek funding to establish The Fatherhood Project.®

## 1976

**April-July:**
The U.S. Census Bureau collects first national data on divorce, child custody, and child support. The Bureau will publish its first report on this data in June 1979.

## 1979

**April:**
The U.S. Census Bureau, along with the Office of Child Support Enforcement, begins the regular biannual collection of national data on child support and alimony.

## 1981

Dr. James Levine founds The Fatherhood Project® at Bank Street College of Education in New York City, with Dr. Michael Lamb and Dr. Joseph Pleck as associate directors. With support from the Ford Foundation and others, The Fatherhood Project® serves as a national research, demonstration, and dissemination project to identify, test, and promote best practices for supporting the involvement of fathers in the lives of children.

## 1982

Charles Ballard founds the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, six years after he first began working with noncustodial fathers in Cleveland as part of a hospital outreach program. The institute pioneers an intensive, one-on-one approach toward connecting fathers with families, with all of its programs headed by couples who model marriage in their own communities.

## 1983

**November 10:**
U.S. Representative Patricia Schroeder of Colorado holds the "Paternal Absence and Fathers' Roles" hearing in the House of Representatives. Dr. James Levine and Dr. Debra Klinman provide testimony from The Fatherhood Project.®

**Also that year ...**
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) funds research efforts to collect data from both mothers and fathers about divorce, child support, and fathers'

# A CHRONOLOGY

involvement with their children.

## 1984

The Fatherhood Project® publishes *Fatherhood USA: The First National Guide to Programs, Services, and Resources for and About Fathers,* by Dr. Debra Klinman and Dr. Rhiana Kohl. In conjunction with the book, The Fatherhood Project® hosts a forum in New York City, which brings together 400 service providers and parents. The forum is replicated in six cities in 1985 and extended to ten cities from 1986 to 1988.

Gary Bauer, a member of President Ronald Reagan's staff, hosts a White House meeting on creating strong communities. The meeting includes a special emphasis on fathers.

Dr. James Dobson, founder and president of Focus on the Family, produces *Where's Dad?* The film series challenges men to spend more time with their children.

The federal Child Support Amendments require states to withhold child support from paychecks of delinquent noncustodial parents and to develop legislative guidelines for determining child support orders.

## 1985

The National Urban League begins its Male Responsibility Project with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Ed Pitt directs the project, which focuses both on adolescent pregnancy prevention and on responsible fatherhood issues. The Male Responsibility Project leads to national conferences in 1988 and 1989 and spawns 60 local programs at Urban League affiliates nationwide.

With funding from the Ford Foundation and others, associates of The Fatherhood Project® implement the Teen Father Project and, subsequently, the Adolescent Family Life Collaboration. Carried out in six cities, these demonstrations lead programs serving teen mothers to reach out to teen fathers and later to the extended families of both teen mothers and fathers. The project continues until 1989.

The Kindering Center establishes the National Fathers Network, an organization that supports fathers raising children with special needs.

## 1986

HHS and the Family Impact Seminar hold a one-day seminar on young unwed fathers at Catholic University. The seminar serves as the basis for a 1988 report by Jacqueline Smollar and Theodora Ooms, *Young Unwed Fathers: Research Review, Policy Dilemmas, and Options,* as well as a 1993 book by Theodora Ooms and Dr. Robert Lerman, *Young Unwed Fathers: Changing Roles and Emerging Policies,* published by Temple University Press.

## 1987

Dr. William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* is published by the University of Chicago Press. The book focuses public attention on the link between unemployment and family breakdown by advancing the thesis that the lack of employment opportunities for African Americans in the inner city makes low-income men "unmarriageable."

## 1988

The U.S. Congress enacts the Family Support Act. The law strengthens paternity establishment, presumptive child support, and paycheck withholding procedures. FSA affects

low-income families by enacting changes to the welfare system and placing an increased emphasis on work. It also includes the first pilot projects to help unemployed fathers find jobs and pay child support: Parents' Fair Share and the Young Unwed Fathers Project.

Greg Bishop founds Boot Camp for New Dads, a hospital-based program that uses experienced fathers to coach new fathers on parenting techniques. By 2002, these programs are operating in nearly 40 states.

## 1989

The Urban Institute Press publishes Dr. Sara McLanahan's and Dr. Irwin Garfinkel's *Single Mothers and Their Children: A New American Dilemma,* which details the declining standards of living for divorced and never-married families.

Dr. Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee write *Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade After Divorce,* published by Houghton Mifflin. Their research documents that children who grow up without fathers are more likely to need psychiatric care.

Dr. James Levine relocates The Fatherhood Project® from Bank Street College of Education to the newly formed Families and Work Institute, and initiates a new line of research on working fathers. Two years later, Ed Pitt joins The Fatherhood Project® as associate director.

## 1990

The Philadelphia Children's Network is founded under the leadership of Ralph Smith; the organization focuses its work on father involvement as a means for improving children's life chances.

Dr. Ken Canfield founds the National Center for Fathering to educate the public about the problem of father absence and to develop methods for improving fathering skills. By 2002, the center reports that it has 225,000 members and over 400,000 men have attended center-sponsored training sessions.

Minnesota Early Learning Development (MELD), which sponsors parenting support groups nationwide, develops a new curriculum specifically for young fathers ages 15 to 25. Over the next ten years, more than 20 communities across the nation launch MELD for Young Dads programs.

## 1991

**June 11:**
U.S. Representative Patricia Schroeder holds congressional hearings entitled "Babies and Briefcases: Creating a Family-Friendly Workplace for Fathers." Among those testifying is Dr. James Levine.

**Also that year ...**
*Beyond Rhetoric,* the final report of the National Commission on Children emphasizes the importance of two-parent families and identifies father absence as a significant social problem.

Dr. Louis Sullivan, then Secretary of HHS, begins a national male-involvement initiative, including grants to Head Start agencies to increase outreach to fathers.

The African-American Men and Boys Initiative (AAMB), an initiative of the Kellogg Foundation, is launched under the leadership of Dr. Bobby Austin. Kellogg spends $11 million on the initiative, funding 32 model projects across the nation aimed at improving opportunities for at-risk African-American men and boys. The Foundation also establishes a National Task Force on African-American Men and Boys,

chaired by civil rights leader Andrew J. Young.

Public/Private Ventures launches its Young Unwed Fathers pilot project in six sites. The project, which lasts for two years, focuses on paternity establishment and giving young fathers the resources and opportunities they need to be good parents and support their children.

Dr. Jeffery Johnson and Pam Wilson create the first fatherhood development curriculum for Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC).

The National Center for Fathering inaugurates its annual fatherhood essay contest. In the next decade, 350,000 children in seven states compete in the contest, writing essays for local newspapers about what their fathers mean to them.

Dr. Frank Furstenberg of the University of Pennsylvania and Dr. Andrew Cherlin of Johns Hopkins University write *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part,* published by Harvard University Press. Their research includes the finding that 40 percent of children in father-absent homes had not seen their fathers at all in the previous year; only one in six children saw their fathers an average of once a week or more.

## 1992

MDRC begins evaluating the Parents' Fair Share service model. A seven-site demonstration project begins two years later and continues until 1997. A large consortium of funders —including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation—support the demonstration.

Vice President Dan Quayle criticizes the television program *Murphy Brown* for portraying the lead character as a willing single mother.

The National Center for Fathering commissions the first national poll about the public's attitudes towards fathering and publishes *The Seven Secrets of Effective Fathers.* The book sells over 150,000 copies and is translated into 10 languages.

Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton promises to "end welfare as we know it," in part by encouraging men to take responsibility for their families.

## 1993

Dr. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead writes "Dan Quayle Was Right" for the *Atlantic Monthly.*

The Philadelphia Children's Network and the Center for the Study of Social Policy convene a roundtable on African-American fathers. The roundtable leads to the publication in 1994 of *World Without Work: The Causes and Consequences of Black Male Joblessness,* by Ralph Smith and Tom Joe.

Joe Jones begins working with low-income new and expectant fathers as part of the Baltimore City Healthy Start Initiative. His work, which ultimately grows into the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development, focuses on helping low-income fathers connect with their children, maintain positive relationships with their children's mothers, and find stable employment.

The U.S. Congress requires states to allow unwed fathers to voluntarily declare their paternity in hospitals.

The National Academy of Sciences holds a workshop that leads to a report, *America's Fathers and Public Policy.* The report describes the diversity of father involvement in the United States, identifies obstacles and incentives to father involvement, discusses how public policy can affect these obstacles and incentives, and suggests further directions for research.

The Fatherhood Project® publishes *Getting Men Involved: Strategies for Early Childhood Programs* and launches a national early childhood training program concentrating on low-income communities.

Richard Louv writes *Fatherlove,* which describes a multidimensional picture of fathers—including their roles as breadwinners, nurturers, and community builders—and offers ideas for policies that would help men fulfill all of these roles. Louv's presentation at Vice President Al Gore's Family Re-Union in 1993 lays the groundwork for the next year's Family Re-Union on the role of men in children's lives.

Judge David Gray Ross is appointed to head the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. During Ross's seven-year tenure, the office broadens its mission to include father involvement as a goal.

Dr. Ronald Mincy joins the Ford Foundation.

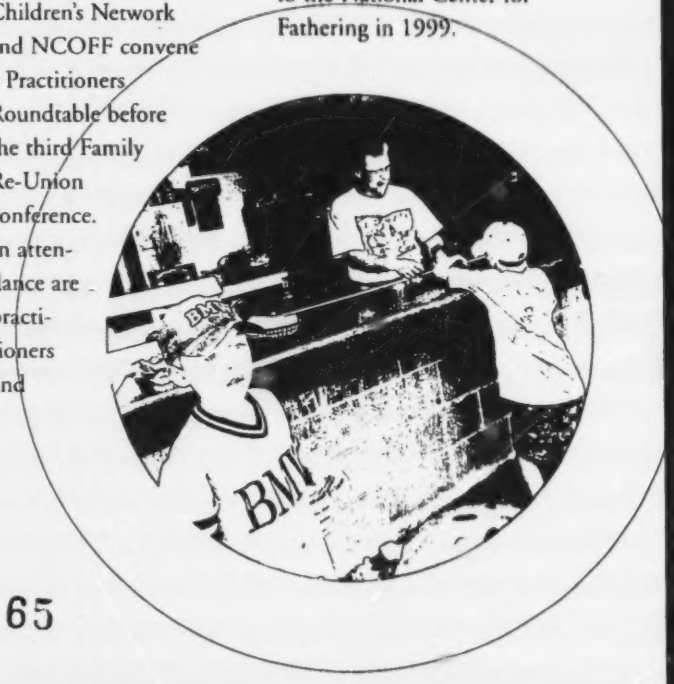
## 1994

**March 7:**
Don Eberly and Dr. Wade F. Horn found the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), with the goal of stimulating a broad-based movement to restore fatherhood as a national priority. NFI's activities focus on raising public awareness and promoting responsible fatherhood initiatives at the state and local level.

**July 1:**
The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) is established at the University of Pennsylvania, with core funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Ralph Smith is the founding director; later that year, Dr. Vivian Gadsden becomes director. NCOFF focuses on expanding fatherhood research within family studies and building a relationship between research and practice that results in better policy-making.

**July 10:**
The Philadelphia Children's Network and NCOFF convene a Practitioners Roundtable before the third Family Re-Union conference. In attendance are practitioners and program administrators who discuss ways to strengthen the field. These discussions lead to the creation of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF) in 1995.

**July 11:**
The third annual Family Re-Union Conference, sponsored by Vice President and Mrs. Gore, focuses on "The Role of Men in Children's Lives." As a result, the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium of the University of Minnesota establishes Fathernet, an online resource for fathers, and Father-to-Father, a mentoring program that moves to the National Center for Fathering in 1999.



**October 27:**
NFI hosts a national summit on fatherhood in Dallas, with more than 250 attendees.

**Also that year ...**
Ralph Smith joins the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Ford Foundation launches the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative—a coordinated effort to promote research, policy development, and practice—aimed at helping low-income, unwed parents to effectively parent their children.

As part of the initiative, the Foundation issues grants to the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization, the Urban Institute, Columbia University, and Princeton University for participation in the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study.

Dr. Sara McLanahan and Dr. Gary Sandefur write *Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps,* published by Harvard University Press.

Public/Private Ventures publishes *Young Unwed Fathers: Report from the Field* by Mary Achatz and Crystal A. MacAllum, one of the first reports to include evaluation results from a fatherhood pilot project.

## 1995

**March:**
NFI publishes *Father Facts,* a comprehensive collection of statistics on fatherhood and the consequences of father absence on child well-being. By May 2002, *Father Facts* is in its fourth edition with more than 100,000 copies in print.

**April:**
The annual KIDS COUNT report of the Annie E. Casey Foundation focuses on father absence and its negative effects on child well-being.

**June 16:**
President Clinton issues an Executive Memorandum urging federal agencies to focus on fatherhood issues.

**June 18:**
Numerous Father's Day celebrations and conferences are held, including "The Role of Men in Children's Lives" at the White House, the "Focus on Fathers Summit" convened by California Governor Pete Wilson, and "The State of Fatherhood in America" symposium sponsored by the Institute for American Values.

**Also that year ...**
The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Ford Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and Danforth Foundation create a funders' collaborative to support capacity building, public awareness, policy research, program demonstration, and technical assistance in the fatherhood field.

The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families (NPNFF) is founded with core support from the fatherhood funders' collaborative, and is based at The Fatherhood Project.® NPNFF is the first membership organization to represent and offer technical assistance to social-service providers that focus on fathers. The project is later based at the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL).

NFI receives a commitment from the Ad Council for a national public-awareness campaign on the importance of fathers. That campaign, which begins in 1996 and continues today, has generated over $100 million in donated television and radio airtime.

The Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy (CFFPP) is founded with core funding from the Ford Foundation. The center's work focuses on policy research, training, technical assistance, and

public education about the barriers facing low-income, never-married fathers and their families.

The Families and Work Institute publishes *New Expectations: Community Strategies for Responsible Fatherhood* by Dr. James Levine and Edward Pitt. It is the first best practices guide for responsible fatherhood programs.

The Nation of Islam sponsors the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. The march focuses not only on ending racism, but also on encouraging black men to be good husbands, fathers, and contributors to their communities. Hundreds of thousands attend the march.

Colorado Governor Roy Romer appoints a task force on responsible fatherhood.

NFI and the Washington Family Council sponsor nationwide public service announcements about the importance of fathers. The campaign features General Colin Powell, former NFL star and U.S. Representative Steve Largent of Oklahoma, and other celebrities.

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics identifies the lack of research on fatherhood as a major issue and launches a public/private partnership to identify gaps in the research.

The Family Impact Seminar hosts a policy seminar about fatherhood on Capitol Hill, which leads to the report *Disconnected Dads: Strategies for Promoting Responsible Fatherhood*, by Theodora Ooms, Elena Cohen, and John Hutchins.

In collaboration with NCOFF, the Institute for Mental Health Initiatives convenes a conference for members of the media, entitled "Fathers and Families in Focus: Exposing Stereotypes and Myths."

David Blankenhorn, director of the Institute for American Values, writes *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*, published by Basic Books. Blankenhorn argues that, in seeking to redefine fatherhood in the wake of the sexual revolution, American society has inadvertently diminished fathers, leading to a decline in child well-being and a rise in social problems such as crime, domestic violence, and child abuse.

NCOFF publishes the first issue of the *NCOFF FatherLit Research Database*, which is subsequently published online and on CD-ROM with almost 9,000 abstracts of research on father involvement.

NCOFF also establishes the Fathers and Families Roundtable Series, meetings of researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers to identify issues and guide research studies in the field. The Roundtable Series helps launch NCOFF's research report series, which begins with seven literature reviews by prominent scholars and provides a context for research efforts in the field.

## 1996

**January:**
In collaboration with Radio America, NFI launches a series of public service radio announcements that feature politicians from both political parties talking about responsible fatherhood.

**February:**
Virginia Governor George Allen, in collaboration with NFI, launches the Virginia Fatherhood Campaign, the first statewide fatherhood initiative in the country.

**May 3:**
President Clinton's Domestic Policy Council, in collaboration with NCOFF, the National Performance Review (NPR), and HHS, convenes a conference of federal agencies to discuss how they can change policies and practices to

promote responsible fatherhood.

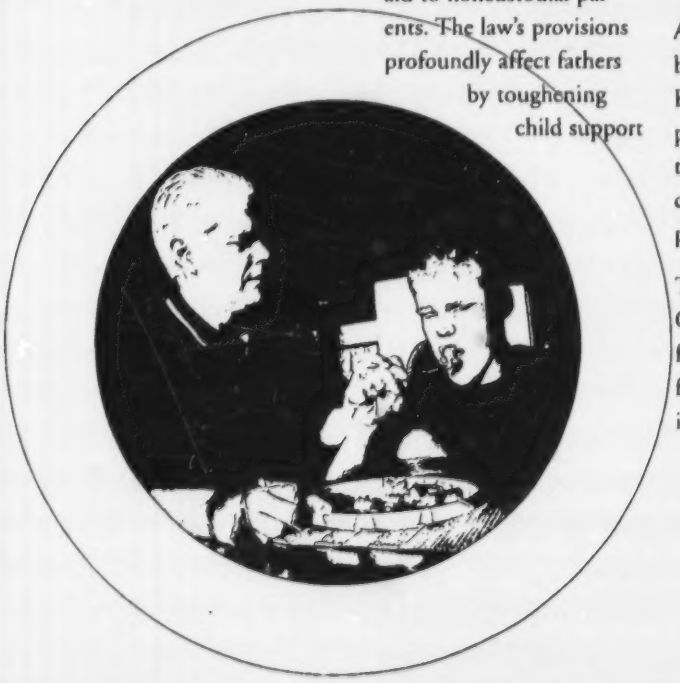
**June:**
NFI hosts an interfaith conference on fatherhood promotion in Washington, D.C., with more than 60 religious leaders attending.

With support from NFI, the U.S. House of Representatives forms a bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Fatherhood to examine the issue of fatherlessness and its role in public policy. The U.S. Senate later follows suit.

*USA Today* runs a special Father's Day issue where photos and articles about fathers are featured on the front page of every section.

NFI, the Institute for American Values, and the Center of the American Experiment release *A Call to Fatherhood,* signed by a group of 40 fatherhood advocates and religious leaders.

**August 22:**
President Clinton signs the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) into law, which replaces the Family Support Act of 1988 and creates a new time-limited welfare system that emphasizes work. PRWORA creates new block grants to states for public assistance to families in poverty, including aid to noncustodial parents. The law's provisions profoundly affect fathers by toughening child support enforcement policies and providing grants to states to improve access and visitation for noncustodial parents.



**October:**
NFI, the Institute for American Values, and the Center of the American Experiment sponsor a conference in Minneapolis to set a fatherhood agenda.

**Also that year . . .**
The National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL) is founded. NPCL focuses on strengthening the management and capacity of community-based organizations that work on family issues.

A Gallup poll sponsored by the National Center for Fathering finds that 79 percent of respondents say the nation's most significant family or social problem is father absence.

The Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and the funders' collaborative initiate community-wide fatherhood events in 25 communities across the nation.

The Florida legislature establishes a statewide Responsible Fatherhood Commission.

The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Program adds a major father studies component to its activities.

The Council of Governors' Policy Advisors publishes *Seven Things States Can Do to Promote Responsible Fatherhood,* by Dr. Wade F. Horn and Eric Brenner.

Dr. William Julius Wilson writes *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor,* published by Vintage Press. The book marks a continuation of Wilson's research on the links between unemployment and family breakdown.

Dr. Robert Hamrin founds Great Dads, which runs seminars for fathers who want to be more involved in their children's lives.

Dr. Ken Canfield writes *The Heart of a Father,* published by Northfield Publishing.

## 1997

**August 5:**
Congress enacts the Welfare-to-Work block grant, which includes the first funding source specifically targeted to help low-income, noncustodial fathers find jobs.

**November:**
Lorin Harris joins the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

**Also that year ...**
The HHS Office of Child Support Enforcement funds eight responsible fatherhood demonstration projects.

The Illinois Fatherhood Initiative (IFI) is founded by David Hirsch. Led entirely by volunteers, IFI begins sponsoring essay contests, events, and public-awareness activities to promote responsible fatherhood and help men become better fathers.

The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) publishes *Map and Track: State Initiatives to Promote Responsible Fatherhood,* the first publication to detail state efforts to promote responsible fatherhood efforts.

The Promise Keepers, a faith-based movement to encourage marriage and father involvement, stages a rally in Washington, D.C. after three years of holding similar rallies across the nation. Hundreds of thousands of men attend.

The Hudson Institute publishes *Fathers, Marriage, and Welfare Reform,* by Dr. Wade F. Horn and Andrew Bush. The report recommends ending preferences for single-parent families when determining welfare benefits, more employment services for low-income men, and a new focus on improving the parenting skills of at-risk families. The report also calls on government to grant preferences to married families for "limited supply" benefits such as Head Start enrollment, public housing, financial aid in education, and job training.

PBS airs *Fatherhood USA,* a two-hour documentary produced by The Fatherhood Project.®

The Fatherhood Project® publishes *Working Fathers: New Strategies for Balancing Work and Family.*

NCOFF establishes the State Policy Series, which brings together state officials to build coherent fatherhood efforts in states and to expose state officials to fatherhood programs and relevant research. Partner organizations include the National Governors' Association (NGA), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and NPNFF.

## 1998

**February:**
NGA forms the Governors' Task Force on Fatherhood Promotion, a bipartisan effort chaired by Governors Tom Carper of Delaware and Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania.

**March:**
U.S. Representative Clay Shaw, Jr., of Florida introduces the first Fathers Count bill, which proposes a $2 billion block grant for states to promote responsible fatherhood. The bill dies in committee.

**April:**
Baseline interviews begin for the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a five-year study that will provide detailed, nationally representative data on unmarried, low-income parents.

**June:**
The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics releases *Nurturing Fatherhood: Improving Data and Research on Male Fertility,*

*Family Formation, and Fatherhood.* The report summarizes existing data and identifies areas where further research is needed.

NFI hosts its second National Summit on Fatherhood in Washington, D.C., with 500 attendees.

**August:**
NPNFF sponsors its first regional forum in Atlanta.

**September:**
MDRC releases interim findings from the Parents' Fair Share demonstration that disappoint many observers; across all seven sites, the program did not significantly raise men's earnings or increase their employment. However, child support collections increased somewhat, though fathers' incomes did not. Three program sites showed some success in raising employment rates and earnings.

**November:**
Morehouse College and the Institute for American Values sponsor a three-day conference, "African-American Fathers and Their Families in the 21st Century," which brings together scholars and advocates from across the political spectrum to develop a plan for promoting father involvement among black males.

Preston Garrison is hired as NPNFF's first executive director.

**December:**
NCOFF begins the second tier of the Fathers and Families Roundtable Series. Meeting topics include welfare reform, poverty and social vulnerability, fathering and family processes, child well-being, fathering indicators and measurement, family development, and issues of race and culture.

**Also that year ...**
Bienvenidos Family Services and the National Compadres Network found the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute (NLFFI), directed by Jerry Tello. NLFFI seeks to help Latino fathers become more active in the nurturing and education of their children.

The NGA Human Services Committee devotes its winter meeting to state programs that promote responsible fatherhood. Seventeen governors attend. NGA also releases *Promoting Responsible Fatherhood,* a guide to best practices for fatherhood programs, by David Brown and Nolan Jones.

Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, in collaboration with NFI, launches the Wisconsin Fatherhood Initiative.

In Texas, the Hogg Foundation and the Center for Public Policy Priorities launch the Texas Fragile Families Initiative, a multisite public/private partnership to help community-based organizations serve young non-custodial fathers.

The Sisters of Charity Foundation in South Carolina commits $6 million over six years to community programs to strengthen the role of fathers in families.

The Russell Sage Foundation publishes *Fathers Under Fire: The Revolution in Child Support Enforcement,* edited by Dr. Irwin Garfinkel, Dr. Sara McLanahan, Daniel Meyer, and Judith Seltzer. The book suggests

that low-income fathers are subject to harsher child support enforcement measures than other fathers and that their child support obligations are disproportionately high.

NCOFF establishes the Family Development Study Group, which includes teams of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and policy analysts.

## 1999

**January:**
The Strengthening for Fragile Families project announces selection of demonstration sites for its program to involve low-income, noncustodial fathers in their children's lives.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities publishes *Developing Innovative Child Support Demonstrations for Non-Custodial Parents,* by Wendell Primus.

**February:**
The Father-to-Father initiative's administrative home for technical assistance is housed at the National Center for Fathering.

**March:**
HHS launches the nationwide public-awareness campaign "They're Your Kids. Be Their Dad."

NFI releases *Fatherhood and Television,* the first analysis of the portrayal of fatherhood on network television, and finds that fathers are often absent in primetime programming. And when fathers are recurring characters, they are generally portrayed as uninvolved, incompetent, or both.

**June:**
NFI and the Mayors' Task Force on Fatherhood Promotion host the National Summit on Supporting Urban Fathers in Washington, D.C.

**July:**
The NCCP releases the second edition of *Map and Track: State Initiatives to Promote Responsible Fatherhood.* The report finds that in the two years since the first report, states have not significantly improved or expanded their responsible fatherhood efforts.

**July 14:**
U.S. Senators Evan Bayh of Indiana and Pete Domenici of New Mexico introduce the Responsible Fatherhood Act of 1999. The bill seeks to create a $50 million annual block grant to states to promote responsible fatherhood and marriage, increase the child support pass-through, establish a $25 million annual challenge-grant program for fatherhood public-awareness campaigns, and establish a national fatherhood clearinghouse. The bill attracts 17 bipartisan cosponsors but dies in committee.

**September:**
NPNFF becomes a fully independent organization and holds its first annual membership meeting.

U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and 24 other senators sponsor a resolution encouraging greater involvement of fathers in their children's lives. The largely symbolic resolution passes the Senate unanimously.

NFI publishes *Ten Things Mayors Can Do to Promote Responsible Fatherhood.*

NCSL creates the Advisory Committee on Responsible Fatherhood—the only national advisory

committee to look at the issue of fatherhood from a state and federal policy context. The Advisory Committee also was the only national committee to convene all the stakeholders—legislative and executive branch leaders, researchers, advocates, and practitioners—for the purpose of developing policy guidance for state policymakers.

**October 14:**
U.S. Representative Nancy Johnson of Connecticut introduces a limited version of the Fathers Count bill, cosponsored by a bipartisan group of 14 representatives. The bill provides $155 million in competitive grants to promote marriage and responsible fatherhood.

**October 28:**
The Fathers Matter! teleconference is hosted by U.S. Department of Education Secretary Richard Riley and HHS Secretary Donna Shalala.

**November 10:**
The Fathers Count bill passes the House of Representatives by a strongly bipartisan 328-to-93 margin. The bill dies in the Senate. Most fatherhood groups supported the bill, but the bill draws opposition from the National Organization for Women (NOW), which charges that the bill's emphasis on marriage would encourage women to stay in abusive relationships.

**November 29:**
Congress and the President enact changes to the Welfare-to-Work block grant that make it easier for states to offer job training and placement services to low-income, noncustodial fathers.

**December:**
The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization receives a second Welfare-to-Work competitive grant because of its success in helping hard-to-employ parents obtain full-time, unsubsidized employment.

NFI publishes *The Faith Factor in Fatherhood: Renewing the Sacred Vocation of Fatherhood*, a collection of essays edited by Don Eberly. The book urges faith communities to promote responsible fatherhood through instruction, rites-of-passage programs, stories, ceremonies, mentoring, and community outreach.

**December 1-3:**
NPNFF sponsors the Midwest Regional Conference in Minneapolis.

**Also that year ...**
North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge launch fatherhood initiatives in their states. Ridge collaborates with NFI in establishing Pennsylvania's initiative.

NCSL publishes *Broke but Not Deadbeat*, a handbook for states on responsible fatherhood programs, by Dana Reichert.

*The Fatherhood Movement: A Call to Action*, a collection of essays edited by Dr. Wade F. Horn, David Blankenhorn, and Dr. Mitchell B. Pearlstein, is published by Lexington Books.

MDRC publishes *Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood*, by Dr. Earl S. Johnson, Ann Levine, and Dr. Fred Doolittle. The book summarizes the findings of the Parents' Fair Share pilot project and argues that, in spite of their limited resources, low-income nonresident fathers are more likely to make stronger efforts to improve child support payments and to become greater participants in their children's lives if they encounter a less adversarial and arbitrary enforcement system.

Paula Roberts of the Center for Law and Social

Policy (CLASP) writes *Setting Support When the Non-Custodial Parent is Low-Income*, and her colleague Vicki Turetsky testifies before Congress about how the federal government and states can make the child support system friendlier to low-income fathers.

Dr. Elaine Sorenson of the Urban Institute writes *Obligating Dads: Helping Low Income Noncustodial Fathers Do More for Their Children.* The report offers advice on how states can reach out to low-income, noncustodial fathers.

The Fatherhood Project® begins a Mott Foundation-supported study of the work/family needs of working poor fathers and of public and private initiatives to assist them.

## 2000

**January 16:**
Vice President Gore, as part of his presidential campaign platform, proposes a series of new government programs and initiatives to promote responsible fatherhood.

**January 26:**
President Clinton announces the Fathers Work/Families Win initiative and other responsible fatherhood proposals as part of his FY 2001 budget.

**January 27:**
The White House announces that child support collections in FY 1999 amounted to $15.5 billion, up from $8 billion in 1992.

**March 29:**
HHS grants waivers to the ten states with Partners for Fragile Families sites, augmenting foundation funding with federal matching funds from the Office of Child Support Enforcement.

**June:**
NCSL publishes *Connecting Low-Income Fathers and Families: A Guide to Practical Policies*, with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

**June 2-3:**
NFI hosts its third National Summit on Fatherhood in Washington, D.C. Vice President Gore addresses the gathering; Governor George W. Bush participates by videoconference.

**June 15:**
U.S. Representative Nancy Johnson introduces the Child Support Distribution Act of 2000, which would make it easier for states to forgive child support debt owed to the state and would encourage states to reinstate child support pass-throughs for families on welfare. The bill incorporates the fatherhood grants program approved by the House of Representatives under the 1999 Fathers Count bill. The bill garners support from a wide range of interest groups, including women's groups such as the National Women's Law Center (NWLC).

**June 16:**
President Clinton devotes his Saturday radio address to Father's Day and directs federal agencies to reach out to state and local governments, community providers, and families to let them know about federal resources available to promote responsible fatherhood.

**June-July:**
The U.S. Department of Education produces *Role of Men in Children's Learning*, and HHS produces *Role of Non-Custodial Fathers Tip Guide.*

**July:**
The Texas Fragile Families Initiative (TFF) launches 12 community-based fatherhood programs across the state of Texas beginning a three-year demonstration project funded through the collaboration of more than 25 private foundations with partnership support from public agency directors in Child Support, Child Protective Services, the Department of Health, and Juvenile Justice.

**September:**
The Social Policy Action Network (SPAN) publishes *Restoring Fathers to Families and Communities:*

*Six Steps for Policymakers,* with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**September 7:**
The Child Support Distribution Act passes the House of Representatives by a vote of 405 to 18. U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine introduces a similar bill in the Senate in October, but both bills fail to pass before the conclusion of the 106th Congress in December.

**September 13-15:**
NPNFF and the Family and Corrections Network (FCN) cosponsor the first North American Conference on Fathers Behind Bars and on the Street.

**November:**
NFI releases the second *Fatherhood and Television* study. This study, focusing only on network shows that include a father and/or mother as recurring characters, finds that fathers are eight times more likely to be portrayed negatively compared to mothers. The report also notes that the majority of television fathers are married to the mothers of their children.

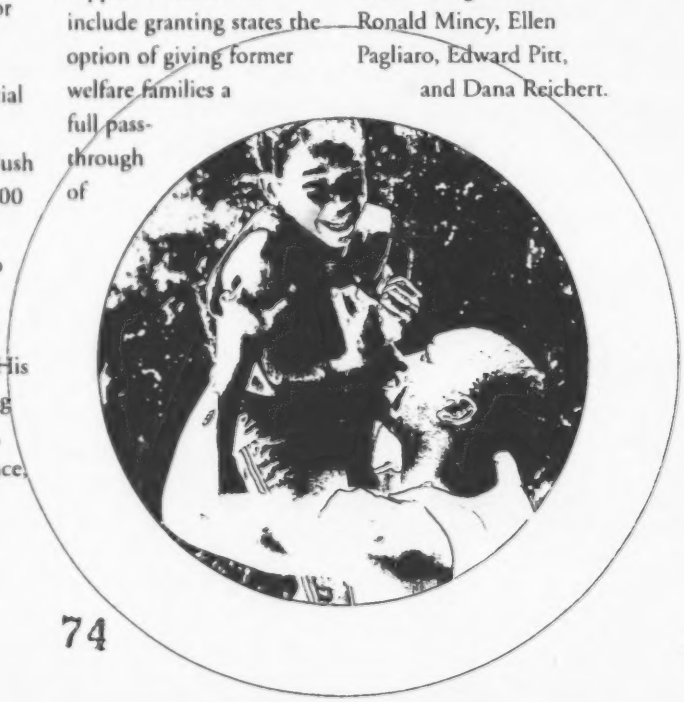
**Also that year . . .**
The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation launches the three-year, six-site Fathers At Work demonstration project, which aims to increase labor market participation, earnings, and parental involvement among low-income, non-custodial fathers under age 30.

Senior Program Officer Dr. Ronald B. Mincy, architect of the Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative, leaves the Ford Foundation for Columbia University.

As part of his presidential campaign platform, Governor George W. Bush promises to provide $200 million in competitive grants over five years to community and faith-based organizations for fatherhood initiatives. His goals include promoting responsible fatherhood, combating father absence, and conducting marriage education courses that teach conflict resolution.

**Postscript:**
In 2001 President Bush includes in his budget $315 million for fatherhood programs, with $64 million approved for 2002, including $4 million to expand state and local responsible fatherhood programs. He additionally proposes that $100 million be set aside for states to explore ways of reducing out-of-wedlock births by encouraging marriage in low-income and welfare families. Finally, the president proposes significant child support reforms that include granting states the option of giving former welfare families a full pass-through of child support payments and supplying federal funding matches that could increase welfare families' incomes by as much as $100 per month.

Special thanks to Eric Brenner of the Illinois governor's office, who compiled a draft timeline in 1998 that served as a basis for this chronology. Thanks also to the numerous fatherhood leaders who reviewed this document and added their own suggestions: Dr. Ken Canfield, Dr. Vivian Gadsden, Preston Garrison, Lorin Harris, Terry Holdren, Dr. Wade F. Horn, Dr. James Levine, Linda Mellgren, Dr. Ronald Mincy, Ellen Pagliaro, Edward Pitt, and Dana Reichert.



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[103]Ralph Smith, address at the Casey Fathers and Families grantees meeting, Baltimore, MD, 14 September 1999.

[104]David Hirsch, personal interview, 17 April 2000.

[105]Willis Bright, interview.

[106]Preston Garrison, personal interview, 27 March 2000.

[107]Edward Pitt, interview.

[108]John Monahan, interview.

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# National Fatherhood Organizations

### BOOT CAMP FOR NEW DADS

Boot Camp for New Dads, formed in 1990, helps new fathers of all ages and income levels. Based in Irvine, California, this 100+ site community education program—usually based in hospitals, churches, community centers, and family resource centers—pairs first-time father "rookies" with "veteran fathers" who have babies two to five months old. The veterans help the rookies master basics such as how to hold, feed, change, and bathe their babies. New dads also learn about stages of child development and how to be supportive of their children's mothers. Within a few months, the new dads return as veterans, continuing the cycle of community education by offering their best advice to the next class.

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### CENTER FOR FATHERS, FAMILIES, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development (CFWD) empowers low-income families by enhancing the ability of men to fulfill their roles as fathers and of men and women to contribute to their families as wage earners. Two beliefs are central to the CFWD approach: that men want to be emotionally and financially responsible for their children, and that poverty can hinder parental involvement and support. CFWD was founded in 1999, but its origins extend to 1993, when Joe Jones developed the Men's Services for Baltimore's federally funded Healthy Start Program. Program elements of CFWD currently include Men's Services, the STRIVE job readiness program, and Partners for Fragile Families.

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### CENTER FOR SUCCESSFUL FATHERING, INC.

The mission of the Center for Successful Fathering is to reconnect fathers with their children and with the traditions of responsible fatherhood. The center accomplishes its mission through research, public awareness, and training. Populations served by the center's programs include new fathers, custodial and noncustodial fathers, incarcerated fathers, stepfathers, divorced fathers, grandfathers, and remarried fathers. The Center's curriculum, *Accepting the Challenges of Fatherhood,* is a hands-on, play-oriented package for the implementation of fatherhood programs in schools and other community settings.

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### CENTER ON FATHERS, FAMILIES, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Founded in 1995 with support from the Ford Foundation, the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy (CFFPP) is a training, technical assistance, and policy development organization. Its mission is to help create a society in which both mothers and fathers can support their children emotionally, financially, and physically. CFFPP also seeks to challenge the negative public perception of low-income fathers. Much of CFFPP's work has centered on reforming the child support enforcement system and bridging the gap between fatherhood organizations and women's organizations.

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### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COUNCIL, INC.

The Children's Rights Council (CRC) is a nationwide, nonprofit children's rights organization that works to strengthen families through education and advocacy. CRC favors family formation and family preservation. But if families break up, or are never formed, it works to assure a child the frequent and continuing contact with two parents and extended family that the child would normally have during a marriage.

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### FAMILY AND CORRECTIONS NETWORK

The Family and Corrections Network (FCN) is a not-for-profit, volunteer organization. Founded in 1983, FCN upholds families of offenders as a valued resource to themselves and their communities so that the criminal justice system, other institutions, and society become supportive of family involvement, empowerment, integrity, and self-determination. FCN has produced numerous publications on families of offenders, provided press information, made presentations before national and local organizations, produced policy recommendations, organized conferences, and provided technical assistance.

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### FAMILY SUPPORT AMERICA

Family Support America (FSA) is a national alliance of people and organizations convinced that in order to do the best we can by our nation's children, we must strengthen and support America's families and neighborhoods. Founded in 1981, FSA builds networks, provides consulting services, and gathers knowledge to help the family support movement grow. The organization has an active fathers program and has included fatherhood tracks in its annul conferences.

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### THE FATHERHOOD PROJECT,® FAMILIES AND WORK INSTITUTE

Perhaps the oldest national fatherhood organization in the country, The Fatherhood Project® is a national research and education project that examines the future of fatherhood and develops ways to support men's involvement in child rearing, as well as practical strategies to support fathers and mothers in their parenting roles. The Fatherhood Project® helps businesses and social-service organizations adopt policies that support fathers as well as mothers.

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### GREAT DADS

Great Dads provides training and a curriculum on fatherhood to fathers interested in making a difference in strengthening families and renewing American society. The program challenges fathers to combat pervasive father absence in America—both physical absence and emotional absence.

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### THE INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY REVITALIZATION (IRFFR)

IRFFR, founded in 1982, runs intensive, one-on-one outreach to families in six cities. At each site, a married couple runs the program and lives in the community to help provide an example of a healthy marriage for clients. The heart of the program is individual counseling sessions with fathers. Institute staff members believe that once fathers develop strong relationships with their children, other changes—including jobs, better relationships with their children's mothers, marriage, and an end to substance abuse or criminal activity—will follow.

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### MAD DADS

MAD DADS (Men Against Destruction—Defending Against Drugs and Social Disorder) seeks to encourage, motivate, and guide committed men in the struggle to save children, communities, and themselves from the social ills that presently plague neighborhoods. MAD DADS employs strategies to engage men in the intervention and prevention of community problems, and is designed to attract, challenge, and prepare men to be vocal, viable, and vigilant in restoring safe communities and healthy families.

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### MINNESOTA EARLY LEARNING DEVELOPMENT (MELD)

MELD seeks to prevent instances of emotional or physical abuse by creating a healthy family environment. MELD programs and curricula bring parents with common needs together into groups that meet over two years. They learn, grow, and become friends while solving problems and creating healthy families. Volunteer group facilitators are experienced parents who are carefully selected, trained, and supported by a MELD professional in each community. MELD began offering a curriculum for young fathers in 1990.

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### THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR FATHERING

In addition to crafting a message that fathers are important to children, the National Center for Fathering tries to offer states, communities, and individual fathers ideas about what they can do to act on that message. The center offers a variety of seminars and small group materials, in addition to airing a nationwide radio program on fathering, all designed to help men become competent and comfortable in their roles as fathers. The center's products are tailored to specific audiences, including businesses, civic groups, social-service organizations, hospitals, schools, and faith communities. The National Center for Fathering frequently partners with the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation.

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### NATIONAL CENTER FOR STRATEGIC NONPROFIT PLANNING AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, INC. (NPCL)

NPCL assists primarily low-income urban and rural communities to develop strong families. The organization provides technical assistance to the Strengthening for Fragile Families Initiative and the National Head Start Association, among others. NPCL's Fatherhood Development curriculum provides a list of best practices for practitioners who are developing fatherhood services. The organization also has founded a Peer Learning College for child support professionals to help create policies and procedures more responsive to the needs of low-income fathers. NPCL frequently partners with and provides services to community foundations, including the Philadelphia Foundation and the Rose Community Foundation.

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### NATIONAL CENTER ON FATHERS AND FAMILIES

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) is a leading research center on fatherhood issues. NCOFF maintains the extensive Fatherlit database, which contains over 8,000 abstracts related to fathers and families. NCOFF holds the Fathers and Families Roundtable Series focused on research, practice, and policy-related issues; and runs the State Policy Series, which brings together state legislators, agency officials, nonprofits, and academics. NCOFF is dedicated to improving practice-derived research and research-informed practice, and works to build better linkages between activities that support

children and father involvement efforts. NCOFF also fosters relationships among state officials and practitioners as well as researchers and practitioners.

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### NATIONAL COMPADRES NETWORK

The National Compadres Network (NCN) is a national effort whose focus is the reinforcement of the positive involvement of Latino males in the lives of their children and families. In November 1988 a group of Latino Hombres gathered to establish the "Circulo de Hombres," a group focused on strengthening and re-balancing the role and responsibility of Hombres in their family and community. Among the projects of the NCN is the Respetar y Leer (Respect and Read) Campaign. This two-fold effort targets domestic violence prevention and literacy, encouraging Hombres, fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and big brothers to read to and spend time with their children.

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### NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) w... founded in 1994 to stimulate a societywide movement to confront the growing problem of father absence, and is dedicated to improving the well-being of children by increasing the number of children growing up with involved, committed and responsible fathers in their lives. NFI is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, nonpartisan organization. NFI is best known for its public-awareness campaigns promoting responsible fatherhood. NFI organizes conferences and community fatherhood forums, and provides training and resource materials to organizations seeking to establish community-based fatherhood programs. NFI publishes a quarterly newsletter, conducts research on fatherhood, works to enhance the effectiveness of public policies to encourage responsible fatherhood, and disseminates informational material to men seeking to become more effective fathers. NFI makes sure to have bilingual materials available and also offers support for specific populations of fathers through programs such as their Military Dads program and the Long Distance Dads program for incarcerated fathers.

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### NATIONAL LATINO FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY INSTITUTE

The National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute aims to meet the complex needs of Latino males with regard to their involvement in their families and community. Through research, training, and direct services the program assesses the development of fathers and their role in the family, as well as addresses issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, gang violence, illiteracy, and teen pregnancy.

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### NATIONAL PRACTITIONERS NETWORK FOR FATHERS AND FAMILIES (NPNFF)

NPNFF is a national membership organization for people and programs working to increase the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of their children. Its current strategic plan is threefold. First, NPNFF is trying to win fathers a spot on the agendas of children's, women's, and family organizations by creating a workshop and conference track. Second, NPNFF is developing a grassroots constituency for fatherhood issues. Third, the organization is undertaking a process to develop a set of program standards and standards of practice for responsible fatherhood services and practitioners.

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**THE SOCIAL POLICY ACTION NETWORK** develops effective social policy proposals by transforming the findings of research and the insights of front-line practitioners into concrete action agendas for policymakers. SPAN's work focuses on early childhood development, child welfare, youth development, fatherhood, welfare reform, and teen pregnancy. SPAN is a 501(c)(3) project of the Tides Center. For more information, visit SPAN's website, www.span-online.org.

**THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION** is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website, www.aecf.org.

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